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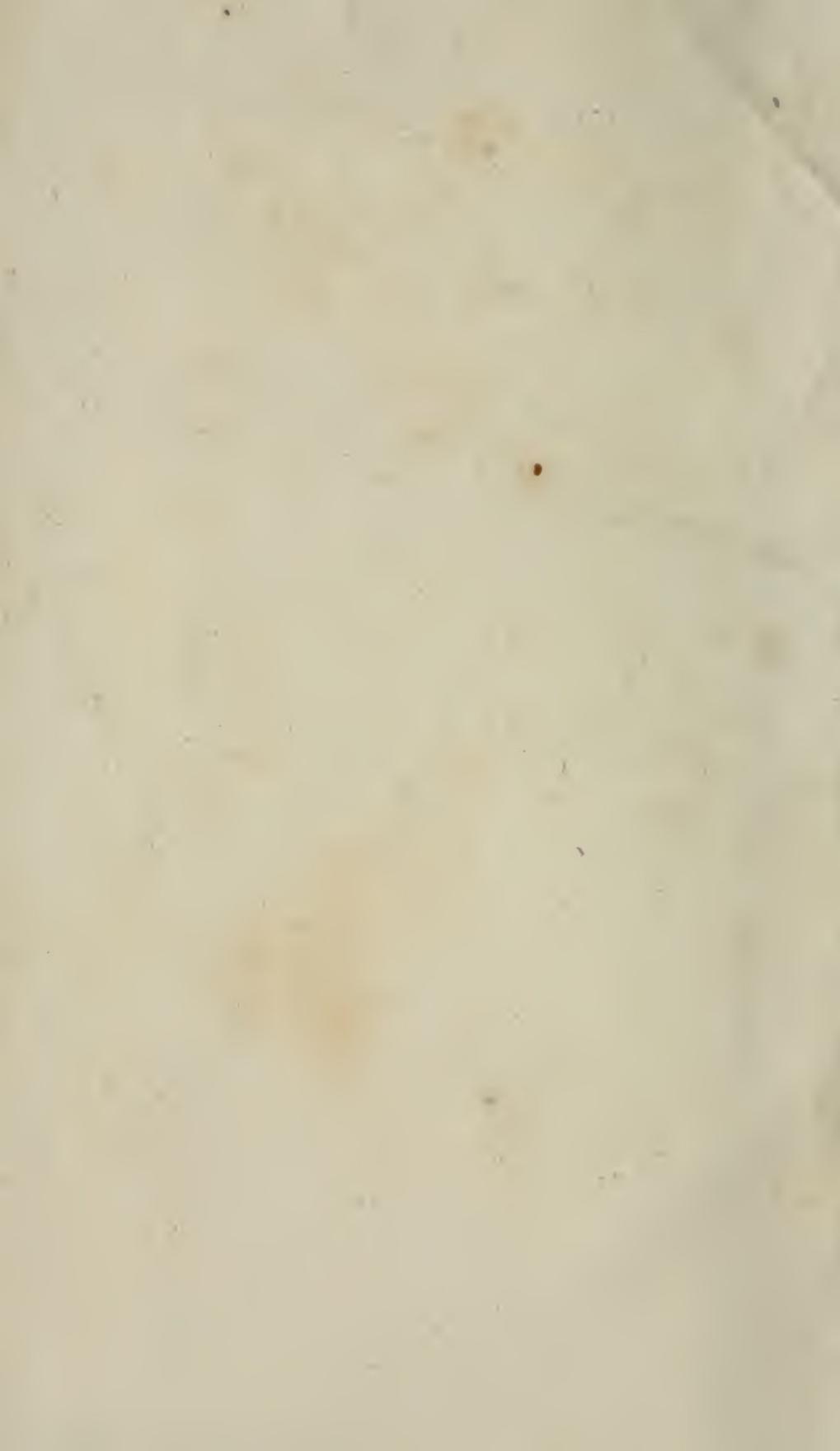
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D U T Y,

A NOVEL,

BY THE LATE

MRS. ROBERTS,

AUTHOR OF "ROSE AND EMILY:"

INTERSPERSED WITH POETRY

AND PRECEDED BY A CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR

BY MRS. OPIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND
BROWN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

—
1814.

Printed by Richard and Arthur Taylor, Shoe-Lane, London.

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SKETCH OF THE CHARACTER
OF
THE AUTHOR.

It is not uncommon to see prefixed to the works both of dead and living authors, an engraving of their face and form; and as many persons are solicitous to know all that can be known of those whose hours have been devoted to the instruction or amusement of the world; such exhibitions of the external appearance of writers are probably surveyed with interest and attention, however insignificant the sketch, and however imperfect the resemblance.

It is this conviction that has led me to undertake the difficult though soothing task of endeavouring to delineate the character of the lamented and admirable woman whose manuscript work I am about to give to the world ; for, if the person of an author be interesting to the reader, the character and the conduct must be infinitely more so ; especially as we gaze on the portrait prefixed to a work, chiefly perhaps with a desire of tracing in it some clue to the mind and disposition of the being whom it represents.

Margaret Roberts was the youngest daughter of a respectable clergyman of the name of Wade, who resided at Boxford in Suffolk ; and in the year 1792 she became, after a long and mutual attachment, the wife of the

Reverend Richard Roberts, third son of Dr. Roberts, late Provost of Eton*. Immediately after their union she went to reside with her husband at the village of Mitcham, in Surry. I have passed over the period of my lost friend's residence under the roof of her father, because, though well aware that she must have been all a daughter ought to be, as virtue is commonly consistent with itself, and the duties are usually inseparable companions, I am most anxious to exhibit her as a wife, that character which is best calculated to call forth the virtues of a woman, and in which the heart and the temper are most tried and most displayed to view.

* Author of *Judah Restored*, and other poetical pieces.

Mrs. Roberts had not the happiness of being herself a parent; but the situation which it was her lot to fill, was such as to awaken in her affectionate nature much of the tender anxiety of the maternal character, as Mr. Roberts had under his tuition seventeen or eighteen boys (chiefly sons of the nobility) from the age of seven to fourteen, over whose health and comfort she watched with tenderness the most endearing. This tenderness was repaid by them by feelings of affectionate gratitude, which survived the presence of the object that called them forth, since many a youth and many a man has continued eager to own, and anxious to return, his obligations to that care which constituted so great a part of the comforts of his childhood.

On this scrupulous attention to the welfare of the children committed to the care of her husband, I might rest Mrs. Roberts's pretensions to the character of an excellent wife; but her claims to that title did not end there.

The *manner* in which she fulfilled her arduous duties as mistress of a family, was equally worthy of imitation. Like one of the heroines of her own novel, she was never idle, never for a moment unemployed; and to the conscientious employment of her time is to be attributed her power of doing more in a day with less apparent effort, than any one who had not witnessed it can be easily led to believe.

Though she had to conduct a very large and troublesome establishment;

though during the occasional short absences of Mr. Roberts she had to preside in the school, no one heard her complain of want of time for any useful or pleasant occupation. No one staying at the house ever missed her at the hour of projected amusement; and though every domestic duty was regularly fulfilled, she seemed, when in the company of her guests, to have nothing to do but to amuse herself and them.

Never were her necessary avocations an excuse for any neglect of her person or her dress.

She was neat, even to *Quaker* neatness, in her appearance and her apparel; and the same presiding spirit of nicety was visible in her house and in her grounds.

It was remarkable also that, though she had so many serious claims on her time, she had more correspondents, and wrote more and longer letters, than almost any other person in a private situation.

Such is the practical usefulness resulting from a resolution to allot to every passing moment some rational employment, or some salutary recreation.

It was this resolution which enabled Mrs. Roberts to be in the space of one little day the superintendant of a large family, the delight of a circle of friends, the punctual correspondent, the elegant work-woman, the instructive writer, and the admirable reader of poetry or prose.

About eight or nine years ago she

was induced to write, and then to publish, a little work called “The Telescope, or Moral Views,” for children; which was a promising proof of those talents for that line of writing, which she afterwards displayed in “Rose and Emily,” a work with her name to it published two years ago.

She has left behind her some other manuscripts, among which are several admirable songs; but at present, at least, the work which I am editing is the only one designed for the public eye.

But to return to the contemplation of her as a woman and a wife.

Though constant occupation was the great secret by which she effected so much, method and order were two

of her principal agents; and like the magic wand, whose touch made the labours of Psyche easy in a moment, method and order operated on every busy department in her household, and every thing was ready at the hour appointed, as if guided by some certain though invisible agency.

It must be supposed that superintending a family consisting of so many children of various dispositions and habits, must have been very trying to the temper as well as to the feelings.

But the temper of Mrs. Roberts was equal to any trial; and unimpaired, or rather perfected by trials, it shone in the benign expression of her dark and animated eye, it dimpled her cheek with a smile the most endearing

and benevolent, and spoke in the mild and tuneful accents of a voice which no one ever heard without feeling disposed to love the being who possessed it.

Nor was the benevolence which irradiated her countenance, which gave grace to her manner and sweetness to her voice, displayed in a less positive degree in her sentiments and her actions: with *her*, kindness was not a habit of manner, but a habit of *mind*. She spoke *affectionately*, because she felt benevolently.

I scarcely know any one so averse as she uniformly was to believe a tale to the disadvantage of another; and when forced to give credit to such tales by incontrovertible evidence, it is certain that she never took pleasure

in repeating them. When communications were of doubtful authority, she never fell into that common fault of saying to her conscience, “I am sure I do not *believe* it, it cannot possibly be true, *but I have heard* so and so:” weakly imagining, as persons in general do, that the affected candour of disbelieving the tale takes away the guilt of relating it. And when indisputable evidence authorized her to relate what she had heard, she was never eager to spread the information; for her good taste, as well as her good feelings, made her dislike to dwell on the crimes or foibles even of those of whom she had no knowledge; and as she was certainly not less generous to her acquaintances and friends, she inspired confidence as well as affection.

in all who approached her. Those who knew her the best were the most inclined to rely upon her candour, as on a staff which would always support them ; and they also knew that hers was the “charity that covereth a multitude of sins ;” and hers the piety which led to that *forbearing* charity also, which suffereth long, and is kind, “which is not easily provoked ;” but which thinketh no evil, but ever keeps in remembrance that *holy rule* for the government of the tongue, “ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

The most suspicious, the most apprehensive, left her presence devoid of fear lest their departure should be the signal for an attack on their manner, their person, their dress, or their character; they knew that, if she spoke

of them at all, it would be to praise them, and to call into notice some good or some attractive quality. Yet her kindness to the absent was not the result of want of power to amuse the person by exhibiting the foibles or peculiarities of the departed guests in a ludicrous or powerful manner ; for, if ever Justice warranted her to be severe on the vices or follies of others, no one could hold them up to ridicule with more wit, or greater success. Indeed, it is commonly those who are most able to be severe with *effect*, whose benevolence and whose principles forbid them the frequent and indiscriminate use of their power.

If it was thus safe and pleasant to be the acquaintance of Mrs. Roberts, how much more delightful was

it to be her friend and her companion !

She always seemed to prosper herself in the prosperity of her friends ; she identified herself so intimately with them, that their joy was her joy, their sorrow her sorrow, their fame her fame. Never did she abuse the familiarity of friendship so far as to wound the self-love of those whom she professed to regard, by needlessly uttering to them mortifying truths ; never did she make herself the vehicle of others' malice, by repeating to them a cruel or severe remark which she had heard concerning them. *Her* lips, *her* eyes were guiltless of

“ The hint malevolent, the look oblique,
The obvious satire, the implied dislike,
The taunting word whose meaning kills.”

It was the constant wish of her benevolent nature to be the means of as much innocent enjoyment as she could to all with whom she associated ; and one felt so certain that her kindness was ever on the alert to veil one's foibles, and show one's good qualities to the best advantage, as moonlight casts a favourable shade over mean objects, and adds new beauty and new grandeur to objects of importance, that to be with her was a gala time to one's self-love ; and perhaps some of the charm which her society possessed was owing to her wish and her ability, not only to appreciate her associates according to the exorbitant demands of self-approbation, but also to her power of making them *feel* that she did so. Yet still she was *no flatterer*. Where she

bestowed praise, or felt affection, she had first reasoned or deceived her understanding into a belief that praise and affection were most righteously deserved.

She seemed indeed to live more than any one I ever saw, in a little world of her own creation ; whose inhabitants were clothed by her beneficent fancy in virtues, talents, and graces, such as real life scarcely ever displays ; and losing her natural acuteness of discrimination in her wish to believe her dreams, realities, she persisted often to reject the evidence of her experience,

“ And thought the world without like that within.”

The other line of this couplet applies

to her with equal justice; for her mind was

“ So pure, so good, she scarce could guess at sin.”

Nor was it likely to run any risk of contamination ; since she possessed that *quiet, mild* dignity of carriage and expression, which had power without offending to awe the *boldest* into propriety, and to give the tone insensibly to the conversation even of the *volatile* and the *daring*.

To have known a woman so amiable and so admirable, will always be amongst the most pleasing recollections of my life, and to have lost her so soon, one of my most lasting regrets. Similarity of pursuits endeared us to each other, and did for our inti-

macy what is usually effected only by the slow hand of time. When we first met, we soon forgot that we had not met before, and a few years gave to our friendship a solidity and a truth, commonly the result of long acquaintance alone.

But the regret which I still feel for her loss, has been in some measure solaced by my having been called upon, at the earnest desire of her husband, anxious for the fame and soothed by the contemplation of the virtues of his wife, to pay this tribute to her memory, and give the following manuscript to the world. The latter task is one which I seemed peculiarly fitted to undertake, because my lamented friend read the MS. aloud to me during the last moments which I passed in her society,

and she confided to me her intentions with respect to the principal characters.

I have merely to add, that after an illness of only three weeks duration, and one to all appearance not attended with danger, she sunk unconsciously into the grave, lamented not only by the husband and the friend who fondly watched beside her bed of death, but by a far far-spreading circle of friends and acquaintances, over whose prospects the unexpected loss of such a joy-diffusing being cast a thick and sudden darkness, and which must have been felt in order to be conceived.

She was buried in the family-vault at Boxford, by the side of her parents and of her sister, the sister of her virtues and her talents, Louisa Carter,

who departed this life on the 23d of November 1810, whom she survived only two years and ten months.

The memorandum which she left behind her relative to the disposal of some of her effects after her death, began with the following words, which she designed should be her epitaph : “ I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come ; ” testifying thereby her belief in that gospel, according to whose precepts she regulated her life, and whose hopes, had consciousness been permitted to her, could not have failed to irradiate the closing scene of her existence.

AMELIA OPIE.

D U T Y.

"There are moments when these idle gossipings may please ; when the mind wearied with thought, and little capable of reasoning, is glad to find refuge where it is employed without labour, and entertained without exertion."

WINTER was past, snow-balls and skating, forfeits and dancing, had ceased to amuse the young, though cards and backgammon still maintained their power over the old : the light of heart and light of heel commenced not only their morning but their evening rambles ; for in the little sylvan retreat which is the scene of this narrative, evening began at five o'clock ; the blue eye of the modest violet was peeping from under its leafy lash, the primroses were decking every sunny bank, and the daisy, though the flower of every season, was bursting forth

in renovated beauty ; all animal as well as all vegetable nature seemed to rejoice in the return of spring, and the little village of Albany shone with happy human faces and lovely blossoms.

Where is Albany ? Search the map, and you may not find it ; make the tour of Europe, and it may escape your observation ; geographers have given it no place in their charts, though the stranger may have found himself *at home in it*. But we will suppose such a place to exist, and tenanted by such people as I shall describe. If you cannot find them, I will not quarrel with you. If you should find them, and your opinion prove contrary to mine, still I will be in good humour ; for the human mind presents as many varieties as the human countenance, and the same objects, and the same circumstances, acting upon different persons, produce very different effects ; a truth which is very forcibly illustrated by Sir Walter Raleigh, who when a prisoner in the Tower of London witnessed from his window a quarrel between

two men in the court below. A short time afterwards a friend called upon him and related the adventure, describing the whole in a manner so different to that in which Sir Walter had viewed it, that it is said he replied to his visitor, “If the same circumstances admit of such totally different representations, who will believe what I have written?”—and immediately was going to throw his History of the World, on which he was then employed, into the fire.—But to return to Albany. Such was the situation of its inhabitants, and such the season of the year, when a post-chariot attended by a manservant on horseback was driven into the inn-yard—I say *the*, for there was but one in the place.

A lady “of no particular age,” and another who appeared about eighteen, with a female servant, alighted from the vehicle. In a little time the two former were seen walking towards the White Cottage, a small but elegant house, which in repairing, furnishing and decorating, had occupied the

thoughts and exhausted the finances of a tasteless widow, who at the end of six years, when this fabric of her fancy was completed, and when the trees and shrubs that shaded it were beginning to reward the hand of the cultivator by a luxuriant growth, was compelled to withdraw from the spot of her own creation, to dismember it of all its internal ornaments and furniture, and to dispose of it to the best bidder. Another and another inhabitant succeeded; and though the beauty of the place pleased for a time, its retirement generally produced that *ennui* from which only minds active or studious, and attached to rural scenes and rational habits, can hope to escape. It was now again vacant; and an advertisement in one of the London papers attracting the attention of Mrs. Sinclair, she was induced to look at a place which appeared from its description exactly suited to her immediate wishes. For this purpose she set out from the metropolis, where she then resided, and at the end of the second day arrived at Albany. Of the

village, or its inhabitants, she was entirely ignorant; but from its geographical situation she imagined it must be healthy, and this with its retirement was her principal consideration. As she descended one of the hills into the village, she could not forbear admiring the lovely valley in which it stood. The church, “pointing with taper spire to heaven,” rose in the centre, and high hilly and irregular fields, rich in cultivation, surrounded it on every side; a small stream ran through the meadows, in which grew in proud luxuriance the tall and graceful arbeal. The first impression of the situation was favourable, and she proceeded to the White Cottage with expectations of approving it. Fastidious indeed must have been that taste which did not find beauty there: yet its situation, simply considered, had no particular advantages; but the combination of art, taste, and judgement, had given to a flat surface the mingled beauties of light and shade. Laurels of which Apollo might have been proud, blended with the cypress, arbor.

vitæ, and other perennial plants, defended it from the north-easterly blasts of winter: —high above these, the birch, sycamore, elm, and graceful poplar, raised their aspiring heads, and courted the summer sun. A veranda gave at once shade and elegance to the south-east. The windows opened upon a little lawn, which was terminated by a thick boundary of laurel and firs which enclosed it from the road. Thus secured from observation, thus retired within itself, like many a fair and modest character, stood the White Cottage of Albany, and was soon engaged by Mrs. Sinclair as the future abode of herself and Julia Douglas, her niece, who resided with her. As they remained that night at the inn, they walked about the village, and were pleased with the air of neatness and simplicity that characterized both the habitations and the people: in some they saw an attempt at decoration and fashion; but the general appearance was such as they expected in a village seventy miles distant from London, and ten from any populous

town; yet it had a post-office, which to Mrs. Sinclair was a very great local recommendation. The parsonage, at a short distance from the church, stood in the valley, embosomed in venerable trees which had shaded the gray heads of many predecessors of the present rector: some of younger growth were planted on the lawn, through a few openings of which the house was discovered, or rather indistinctly seen; for, like the cottage, this seemed also to withdraw from observation. The green latticed porch, covered with clematis, honeysuckle, and jessamine, was a perfect arbour; every plant that could attach itself to the front of the house united to form a verdant covering; and in this embosomed dwelling lived the worthy rector, Mr. Herbert, with his wife and daughter.

The baronet's house rose prominently, both in situation and colour, about a mile from the village, over which it seemed to throw a disdainful glance. Red as the reddest earth could form the bricks, square, tall and commanding, with green-houses

and hot-houses, and walls and shrubberies, and plantations and canals, and statues and obelisks, and temples and towers, and turrets and summer-houses, in heavy magnificence and gorgeous grandeur proudly peered *the mansion*—the mansion of Sir Thomas Wills, colonel of the county militia, sheriff for the county, and one of his majesty's justices of the peace for the said county--where he resided nine months in the year with his lady and eight daughters, all unmarried.

With these observations made by Mrs. Sinclair, and the intelligence gained by her maid-servant, the next morning she left Albany, with an intention of taking up her abode there in about a month.

"Did you see the lady who has been to look at the White Cottage?" said Arabella Hopkins, the attorney's daughter, to Catherine Foster, the apothecary's daughter. "Yes." "And what do you think of her?" "Papa says she is very like the countess of ——, whom he was called in to

about ten years ago, when she sprained her foot as she jumped from her carriage to walk down the hill into the village—very like her indeed !” “ I wish, my dear Catherine, you would not always bring in the countess and her sprained ankle—every body is like *her*, or *not* like her.” “ Very well, I will offend you no more,” said Catherine rather haughtily. “ Pray did you see this lady ?” “ I did—and I think her one of the finest women I ever saw.” “ So my papa says—the countess—but I beg pardon—” “ O, I find,” replied Arabella laughing, “ I shall hear of nothing else but the countess to-day, so good bye; and yet (desirous of telling all she had remarked) I may as well tell you what I think, and what others think. Though a fine figure, she was so plainly drest that no one could have supposed she rode in her own carriage: and as for the young lady with her, who the maid said was her niece, I am sure I should never have guessed she came from London; for she had nothing on but a plain pelisse, and a close

straw bonnet as mean-looking as Ellen Herbert's." "Perhaps they travel incog." replied Catherine, "for my papa says great people often do; and Mrs. Sinclair, as she calls herself, had two servants with her—an outrider as the——" "And an inrider," said Arabella, partly apprehending something was again coming out about the countess. Catherine, vexed to be interrupted, continued: "Mrs. Sinclair, as *she calls herself*, may do right to travel incog." "I dare say you believe she is really Mrs. Sinclair." "Why, what reason have I to believe otherwise?" "My papa says we should never believe what people say of themselves." "And my papa," returned Catherine, "says, 'we should live with a friend as if he were one day to become an enemy';—but I should not like to be so suspicious." "Well, we shall see who this Mrs. Sinclair is when she lives amongst us," replied Arabella, with a sarcastic smile that intended to convey a great deal.

In a fortnight the furniture arrived at the

cottage, and a servant to give directions and to assist in arranging it. Before this was completed, Mrs. Sinclair and her niece arrived, and with them two other women-servants and a footman; who formed, with a gardener, the whole of her establishment.

Greatly was the curiosity of the villagers excited by their new resident. "Who can they be?" inquired one; but none could answer. Then "was she married, or single, or a widow?" At last it was known that she was unmarried. "But who was the young lady, *called her niece?*" She bore so strong a resemblance to her aunt, that she might be taken for her daughter:—some doubted whether they should do these new comers the honour of a call; whilst all were anxious to form their opinions from closer observation.—"We shall see if Sir Thomas and Lady Wills visit them," said one; "Or if Mr. Herbert," said another. "Oh! he will, I have no doubt," replied a third; "he thinks it right to be acquainted with all who reside in his parish." "But he should con-

sider he has a daughter, and be cautious of the acquaintances he makes for her." "And that he has a son too; there may be more danger for him, I think." "I dare say Mrs. Sinclair will be too much of a fine lady to attend church frequently, and perhaps will not condescend to come at all; and therefore those who might visit her will not have an opportunity."

While scandal, suspicion, and conjecture were spreading their hints and surmises throughout the village circle, the unconscious objects of them were busily engaged in little tasteful decorations for the interior of the cottage, placing their books and pictures, and disposing the furniture conveniently and elegantly.

"Julia," said Mrs. Sinclair, "do you think you shall be happy in this retirement, with no other society than your aunt, your books, and your music?" "Can my aunt doubt it?" replied Julia; "with my aunt only I could be happy; I would find books in the running stream, sermons in stones,

and good in every thing. Let me but see your health restored, and your spirits cheerful, I shall be happy.” A tear swam in the eye of Mrs. Sinclair; and after a few moments of thoughtful silence, she said, “ We shall be visited, I have no doubt; and I hope you will find some companion whom you will like, that you may ramble about the beautiful fields which appear to surround us. I hope soon to have a low chaise, and a sober jog trot horse, and then I will explore the highways and lanes with you; but till then”—“ Till then, dearest aunt, I will sit with you, stroll about the garden with you, read to you, sing to you, paint with you. Oh! fear not that I shall want amusement! Even though the village offers no associate for me, I have never in my life felt dull or gloomy; and now—

‘ Ah! where shall I so sweet a dwelling find?
For all around, without, and all within,
Nothing, save that delightful is, and kind,
Of goodness savouring and a tender mind,
Rises to view.’

“ These are poetical flights, my Julia,” re-

plied her aunt ; “and though they may sometimes elevate our feelings above common circumstances, yet they cannot long sustain us ; and situation, such as it really is, will have its influence : but we will endeavour to find amusement in ourselves, and in each other.” “How brightly does the sun welcome us in a morning when we enter the breakfast parlour ! It is like the smile of a friend, my aunt, and I rejoice to meet it.” “There breathes the social spirit,” thought Mrs. Sinclair ; “I fear I have been wrong in seeking this retirement for that dear girl ; but the sun is a friend, my Julia, and a parent too.” “*A parent !*” repeated Julia, and her fine eyes were lifted up to Heaven, “have I a parent ? perhaps there.....” “And here too, my child,” exclaimed Mrs. Sinclair, holding out her arms. Julia flew to her embrace, and tears of undefined emotion streamed from her eyes.—“When will the mystery that attends me be unfolded ?” her voice murmured as her head lay on the bosom of her aunt. “In time it will : but be patient ;

we must not yield to these feelings ; recover yourself, and we will return to our employment of arranging the books and pictures.” Many of these were dear and precious memorials of friends divided from them by distance, but attached, closely attached by sentiment ; and as they were suspended on the wall, many a fond thought, a tender sigh, or silent tear, was given to these mute images. “I should like to know the history of them all,” said Julia ; “for the expression of many greatly interests me. I think, my dear aunt,” she continued, resuming her gaiety, “that you may be compared to the great Fingal himself, as he sat in his airy hall surrounded by the shades of his heroes.” “And pleasant yet mournful to my soul is the remembrance,” said Mrs. Sinclair. Several landscapes and flowers, scenes of peculiar interest, or the painting of some dear friend, with ornamental china and flower baskets, finished the interior of this room. Some more sacred resemblances were reserved for the sanctuary, a small light closet

that joined Mrs. Sinclair's apartment, and to which no one had access without her permission. These employments occupied the first three or four days after their arrival; and when they rested from them, the piano forte of Mrs. Sinclair and the harp of Julia mingled their delightful sounds in sweetest harmony.

Mrs. Sinclair, though the aunt of a tall girl of eighteen, was not an old woman "rouged and repaired for an ungrateful public"—she might even have appeared a young one—but she disdained to deceive by artificial colours, and through a pure transparent complexion the motions of a mind as pure frequently betrayed themselves. Though she was

"Just in the zenith of her golden days,
When the mind ripens, ere the form decays,"

she had adopted the brevet rank of Mistress. Numerous were the conjectures upon the assumption of a title which is generally adopted with reluctance, though willingly accepted; and in this instance neither Timé nor Hymen appeared to have conferred the

distinction. Mrs. Sinclair, however, as she was denominated, looked forward to a life of "single blessedness," without dread or reproach ; and the chief object of that life was Julia, to whom she was a mother, guardian, friend, cherishing and admonishing, protecting and supporting, enlivening and indulging her. Her face was still so beautiful that it was difficult to suppose it had ever been more so. The spirit of a fine and brilliant eye was chastened by the softness and benevolence of her heart ; yet, when it was necessary, it could assume an expression that at once repulsed the forward and awed the daring. Her person was tall, and, though rather large, finely proportioned ; the tones of her voice were peculiarly expressive ; and all she uttered bore the stamp of a superior and cultivated intellect, combined with the richest powers of imagination. Her manners were easy and dignified, and though polished by early association with the highest circles, yet possessed a native charm and originality, that strength of character will

in many points retain, whatever may be the artificial tints it receives from the hand of fashion.

Though in London she received the visits of gentlemen without the usual sanction of the presence of a married female; and though she was in correspondence with many, yet so unequivocal had been her conduct through life, so extensive was the circle of her acquaintance, so well was she understood, that, like Judith, “there was never known an evil report of her.” The only subject of surprise which she excited was, that with all her attractions of person, and the still greater charms of fortune, she had remained unmarried, though it was well known her hand had frequently been solicited. Some generously ascribed her refusals to a resolution of devoting her life and bequeathing her property to Julia, the orphan daughter of a beloved sister, who it was reported was dead, and dying commended her child, then an infant, to her care, until the father who was absent should return to claim her. Such

was the report that had gained the greatest currency, and had settled into a kind of belief, though occasionally there would arise a few varieties of opinion, which tended to attach a mystery to the birth and connections of Julia.

In a place so retired as Albany, Mrs. Sinclair imagined curiosity would not seek to inquire any further than as to names and fortune ; and whatever were her motives for wishing the investigation to extend no further, her opinion that it would not, certainly operated as a recommendation to the place. In this opinion she deceived herself ; for never is curiosity so keenly awakened, conjecture so busy, or invention so ingenious, as in a village or a small town. It is there that envy, malice and all uncharitableness walk their daily rounds. With few objects to engage attention, vices and virtues, which are disseminated over society in general, are attributed in a double or treble proportion to the few unfortunate individuals who compose this village world. Every look; every word

is marked, commented upon, and interpreted; nothing is spoken but of each other; a ribbon cannot be changed without being noticed, or a phrase uttered without being repeated: but, as it travels from mouth to mouth, it becomes so garbled that all its original connections and dependencies are lost. The metropolis and its vicinity, however unfavourable they may be to individual simplicity of manner, have every social advantage; the understanding is better cultivated, the mind more stored with images, science has more students, the liberal arts more patrons, genius more admirers, and conversation more competitors; public topics engage the attention of society, politics, business and pleasure are discussed, and domestic incidents are not required to supply subjects for conversation or animadversion.

Though Mrs. Sinclair had been a resident of Albany but four days, and though every article of furniture had not found its proper appointments; though her house was not in every part complete; yet she did not consi-

der these as sufficient reasons to absent herself from church in order to avoid receiving visits until every thing was finally arranged. What was the surprise of the congregation, and the pleasure of Mr. Herbert who had just ascended the desk, when they beheld the graceful dignified figures of Mrs. Sinclair and her niece enter their seat, which was next to that belonging to the parsonage! Even two of her servants were also there. Every one was astonished, and could scarcely restrain their whispers during service: but they knew that Mr. Herbert required at least the decorum of silence in his congregation; and indeed his manner was sufficiently solemn to command it even from the most irreverent. In a voice deep, manly, and impressive, he began the exhortation. The penitential seriousness with which he read the confession, the solemn tone of the absolution, and the pious supplication of the Lord's prayer, fixed the entire attention of Mrs. Sinclair, and impressed upon her mind feelings and sentiments of the highest respect

and admiration. He observed the devotion which she and her niece showed during the service, and entertained a favourable opinion of his new parishioners. When he ascended the pulpit, no longer absorbed by her own particular devotions, Mrs. Sinclair directed her eyes as well as her attention to the preacher; and as she gazed on his benign countenance, on his silver locks that parted on his open forehead, and fell in short waving curls upon his temples; his clear complexion, the result of health and temperance; his fine upright figure, that seemed to mark a conscience void of offence both to God and man;—she could have fancied some venerable patriarch had stood before her, or that she heard and beheld the divine preacher and apostle at Athens. The sermon, both in style and subject, was exactly suited to his auditors; he inculcated moral duties by divine precepts, and gave that illustration of our Saviour's commands in such a manner as to prove the practice of them easy. He seemed exhorting his hearers as a friend,

rather than a ruler, yet with an earnestness that expressed how deeply he felt the importance of his office, and of his being the servant of Him whose word is our law. He painted the Christian religion as he felt, believed, and practised it; and all his precepts were founded upon the example of its divine original.

Mrs. Sinclair remained in her seat till he had left the pulpit, considering it a want of respect to the clergyman, and an indecorous indication of impatience, to hurry away the instant the service is ended. On crossing the churchyard, Mr. Herbert had stopped to speak to a person; and as she passed him, from an involuntary feeling of respect, she curtsied. Julia did the same; and taking his hat quite off, he lowly bowed his venerable head to his new and amiable-looking parishioners. Mrs. Sinclair from early habits, impressions, connections, and associations, had a particular respect for the clergy; and when they really performed their duty, she thought no profession of so much impor-

tance to society, or capable of imparting so much comfort to individuals. What a blessing to a parish is one who will “go about doing good ;” who will inquire into the sorrows and wants of his parishioners ; who will succour, soothe, counsel, and instruct them ; who will reconcile animosities, and strengthen friendship ; who will establish peace, good will, and charity, amongst his neighbours ; who will encourage industry, neatness, and sobriety ; who will practise what he preaches, and confirm his precepts by his example ! Such a one she fancied she saw in Mr. Herbert ; and she congratulated herself on the residence she had chosen. She had observed also Mrs. Herbert and her daughter, and was pleased with the appearance of both.

“ Who,” said Julia as they walked homeward, “ can say that age is dark and unlovely ? When I looked at the tall upright figure of Mr. Herbert, and at his open and heavenly countenance, I thought of a fine Doric column, sublimed not impaired by time.” “ It

is indeed fine," said Mrs. Sinclair. " And did you observe his daughter, my dear aunt? how mildly did her soft brown eye beam from under her modest straw bonnet! how simply, yet how becomingly, was she drest! I thought her figure almost elegant." "I thought so too, Julia; and I hope we shall like them as well on further acquaintance as we do on this first glance."—In the mean time the persons they were discussing were also commenting upon them; and the impression each had made was reciprocally favourable.

"I wish you, Maria, to call upon them soon," said Mr. Herbert. "But we do not yet know who they are," replied his wife. "They are my parishioners," answered Mr. Herbert, "and as such entitled to our attention. If they prove unworthy of it, it must be withdrawn; but the shepherd should know all his flock." Mrs. Herbert contended not with her husband's wishes, and adapted her conduct to them, if she could not exactly coincide in his opinion. She

therefore promised to call with him the next day.

Miss Arabella Hopkins and Miss Catherine Foster and their mammas were in the midst of their wonderings at seeing the new comers at church. "I am sure," said Arabella, "I wish I had known they were coming, and I would have put on my new bonnet and feather." "And so would I," said Catherine; "they will take us for dow-dies." "Well," said Mrs. Hopkins, "you both look smarter than they, I can assure you:—I never saw people so plainly drest." "But did you see how nice and fine their gowns were, mamma? I really think both were India muslin,—and such a lace veil! Mrs. Sinclair had quite real lace, and put over quite a plain bonnet!" "I am surprised," said the notable Mrs. Foster, "that they could think of coming to church so soon—it is impossible their house can be ready to receive company—it must be quite in confusion, I think, though they have three maids, and I am told they rise early, which

gives their servants time ; nay, I did hear,—it was the carpenter himself (who was nailing down a carpet) who told me,—that the young lady, Miss Douglas as she is called, absolutely got a hammer, and was knocking in nails and hanging up pictures herself, singing, he said, so sweetly as she did it !” “ Shall you visit them ? ” said Mrs. Hopkins. “ I really can’t tell,—I think so,—just to see how I like them, and who they are.” “ As to who they are, that will not be easily found out, I believe,—though the servants give them a prodigious good character, and say they have all lived four, six, and ten years with them, and would not live any where else for double the wages—(I wish I could keep mine as many months, but they are such idle girls hereabouts !)—that Mrs. Sinclair is the best and kindest lady ; so good when they are ill, so considerate at all times ! and that on a Sunday evening she reads a sermon to them, and explains the lessons of the day ; which is very proper, we must allow, though I should think rather

troublesome : however, it looks well. Miss Julia, they say, is the nicest young lady that can be, very fond of her aunt, and (between ourselves) she sometimes calls her mother."

" Dear me ! " exclaimed Mrs. Foster, " then depend upon it it is so. No, indeed, I shall not visit any such people; for the servants all say that Mrs. Sinclair, though she does not look old enough to be called Mistress otherwise, never was married. I shall not visit them, you have said quite enough for me. Yet any body might know that she was mother to the young one ; for I never saw so great a resemblance in my life, the same eyes, only Miss Douglas's are rather larger, exactly the same nose and mouth, certainly very handsome ;—but we must not be led away by beauty—though beauty, poor thing ! may have led her away. Well, I am sorry, but not surprised. Mr. Hopkins said he could find no arms on her carriage, only a crest. It was a *friend's* carriage, I dare say—I suppose he will visit her and her daughter sometimes." And with this charitable supposition,

nods, winks, and smiles, the two amiable friends parted.

On the morrow Mr. and Mrs. Herbert and Ellen called at the White Cottage, and were admitted, though the house was not in complete order: not even one apology was offered because the curtains were not all put up, the carpets nailed down in all the rooms, nor was any information given upon the subject. The little breakfast parlour was tastefully arranged; and as this was the one Mrs. Sinclair intended principally to sit in, she there received her visitors with that ease which marks a well-bred woman, and a degree of cordiality that expressed as well as invited friendship. Notwithstanding the silver locks that prematurely graced the brow of Mr. Herbert, he did not appear to be sixty years of age, and Mrs. Herbert was many years younger. If Mrs. Sinclair had been delighted with him in his official capacity, she was as much charmed with him as a companion. Well read in the learning of the schools, both ancient and modern, sacred and pro-

fane, intimately acquainted also with our best authors, and not disdaining even the lighter walks of imagination, he was at once the enlightened scholar, the sound divine, and the entertaining companion. His language was fluent and elegant ; his opinions, however just, free from all dogmatical or dictatorial positiveness ; and whilst his manners possessed all the courteous gallantry of the old school, the very spirit of philanthropy flowed from his lips. In Mrs. Herbert there was a thoughtful abstraction of manner, a pensive seriousness of countenance, and an appearance of extreme delicacy of health ; she spoke little, and seemed to be more deeply occupied by reflection than observation. “ Maria,” said the good rector, as if to awaken her from a reverie the source of which he but too well understood, “ Maria, have you observed this picture ? ” and his eye and smile seemed both to chide and to encourage her. A faint blush crossed her cheek, and she made an effort to recover herself. Ellen in the mean time was in con-

versation with Julia. Though occasionally it was general, music, books, painting and rural pleasures were the subjects; and though with the first, as a science, she was unacquainted, yet she professed herself extremely fond of it, and lamented that she had never had a favourable opportunity of learning on any instrument, as she thought it would often amuse her father and mother, who were particularly delighted both with vocal and instrumental music. "I hope," said Julia, "they will permit us sometimes to amuse them; my aunt plays finely on the piano-forte, and I accompany her on the harp; we have great pleasure in our own little concerts, and, I believe, love as much to hear ourselves play and sing as Corporal Trim loved to hear himself read." The playfulness, candour and good humour of the comparison pleased Mr. Herbert, and he gave Julia one of his most approving smiles; whilst Ellen's cheek glowed with the warmth of her heart, and she longed but dared not to take her hand.

An hour glided away in conversation on

various topics, without the speakers having once recourse to village news ; and when they arose to take leave, even Mrs. Herbert expressed a hope of intimacy. The rector held out his hand, “ May I thus presume,” said he, “ to present you with my hand before our friendship has seen one sun set ? But there are some countenances which we seem to understand in a moment, some characters of which we carry the touch-stone in our own hearts ; and I feel, dear madam, as if we already had been seven years acquainted.” Mrs. Sinclair pressed the offered hand between hers, and presented her other to Mrs. Herbert, who accepted it with a faint smile.

Ellen Herbert was about seventeen, timid and retiring in her manner, but without the slightest awkwardness. Her complexion was of a clear brown ; and though her features were not regularly beautiful, her countenance was beyond the painter’s art to imitate. No one could exactly define what was the charm she possessed ; it was a something in

the tone of her voice, in the touching sweetness of her smile, or in her mind-illumined eye. She and a brother were the only two remaining of a large family; and the successive deaths of five children within the short space of three years had so agonized the feelings of Mrs. Herbert, that her spirits were broken and her health was undermined. Mr. Herbert sustained these losses with more apparent firmness, in order to support the spirits of his wife: but whilst the christian leaned on the staff of consolation, and looked to another and a better world for a reunion with the treasures he had lost in this, his heart was torn with all a father's feelings. Four years had now elapsed since the last of these treasures was wrested from them, and still the countenance of Mrs. Herbert indicated the grief that had settled in her bosom: she did not yield to her sorrow without an effort to subdue it; and she endeavoured to draw such comfort from the living, as would teach her to cease mourning for the dead: —But there were moments when every

source of consolation failed in its effect, except that which we derive from supplication and prayer; and this she sought in the solitude of her own chamber. She would then return to her family with the calmness of resignation, and sometimes the cheerfulness of hope painted upon her countenance; but in general her air, her voice, her features indicated a mind wedded to calamity.

Edmund Herbert, who was about two-and-twenty, and the eldest of their children, was still at college, distinguished alike by talents and virtue: in him the pride and affection of his parents found a just object. Several times had he borne off prizes which proved him to be the profound mathematician, the well informed classic, and the elegant poet. He had just taken his bachelor's degree, and was studiously reading in order to enter the list of candidates for another university honour.

Several visits had passed between the rector's family and the inhabitants of the White Cottage, every succeeding one strengthening the favourable impression of the former, be-

fore Mrs. Hopkins or Mrs. Foster or any other person of the village had called. Poor Mrs. Hopkins was in an absolute state of “gum velvet,” fretting herself into a fever with her curiosity to see Mrs. Sinclair and her niece, to know what sort of people they were, and how they had fitted up the house, and her doubts whether Sir Thomas Wills’s family would condescend to notice these new comers, these strangers, or not. Lady Wills was the model, in manner, dress and opinion, on which Mrs. Hopkins formed her own; and as copying her ladyship was an infallible proof of approbation, Lady Wills, however provoked she might be at seeing the awkward resemblances of her caps and bonnets, and her caricatured airs and graces, found so many sources of amusement in the gossip that this lady detailed to her, and received so many honeyed words of compliment, that she treated her with peculiar marks of distinction, and Mrs. Hopkins believed herself her dearest friend. “It strikes me that I am the person the most to her taste of

any hereabouts," she would say. Lady Wills was pleased in finding an associate to whom she could communicate all her petty vexations, all her domestic troubles, the provoking and teasing way of Sir Thomas, the unmanageableness of her children, and all the thousand griefs which she imagined were peculiarly her own. Then she would relate all the history of her London life, the balls, the routs, the operas, the gaieties of the metropolis, the admiration excited by her own taste and her daughter's beauty, with all the scandal of high life, "the which to hear would Mrs. Hopkins seriously incline."

Now whilst she was vacillating between curiosity to see Mrs. Sinclair, and doubt whether Lady Wills would visit her, it struck her that her ladyship would certainly know who Mrs. Sinclair was. If she had lived in Grosvenor-square, as the servants said, and in a more splendid style than she did at Albany,—if she were a lady *comme il faut*, or if not,—Lady Wills, who knew all the world, would certainly know her. But

to wait for Lady Wills's information would be wearing out some months in impatience. Curiosity therefore prevailed over caution, (what woman would not have done the same?) and she determined to call on Mrs. Sinclair. If Lady Wills's report was unfavourable, she could plead her own ignorance; and at all events she should be better able from ocular observation, than from report, to describe to her ladyship who and what she *seemed* to be. Thus reasoning, she arrayed herself in her blue pelisse trimmed with pink, and a pink bonnet trimmed with blue; and as the sun was intense, she put over her ruby-coloured complexion a thick white muslin veil, such as she had seen Lady Wills wear in an open carriage,—so thick she could scarcely see through it, and so warm as greatly to incommodate her breathing, and add to the effect of a sultry day. But she was drest, she thought, properly for a morning call, and had she died she would not have removed it. Arabella's white satin bonnet with a feather hanging down over her shoul-

der gave no shade whatever to her tawny complexion; but thinking it looked very elegant, she would not add a veil: and thus adorned, Mrs. Hopkins and her daughter sallied forth to the White Cottage the second week after the arrival of Mrs. Sinclair. They found her writing, and Julia painting a very beautiful border for a dress. Mrs. Sinclair put away her desk and received her visitors with that graceful ease for which she was so distinguished, at the same time with a dignity and reserve which prescribed to them their due boundary. They felt this; and even the free and loquacious Mrs. Hopkins dared not indulge in that volubility which she did at the very first to Lady Wills. Arabella admired the trimming vastly, and asked her when she meant to wear it. "It is not for myself," Julia replied, "but for a friend in town." "Dear me! how good of you to paint it for her!" Julia smiled, and Arabella wondered what she could smile at.

Mrs. Hopkins talked of Lady Wills and her family, and wished to appear a person

of vast importance in the eyes of Mrs. Sinclair, by the very intimate terms on which she was with Lady Wills: they were like sisters—exactly like. She said “Sir Thomas was a very odd man—really very odd ; and poor Lady Wills, if she was not the sweetest temper in the world, could not live with him. He kept carriages and horses ; but sometimes he would not let her have either to pay a morning visit, even if her life depended upon it. Then he would have his dinner to a moment, or there was such rating the servants ! such storming ! And if his lady and daughters were not ready, he would scold them all dinner-time. She had even seen Miss Lavinia and Miss Anna Maria, two sweet, amiable, gentle creatures, go into strong hysterics at the same time, and Sir Thomas would only order them out of the room till they recovered.” “Such scenes must be very unpleasant to witness,” said Mrs. Sinclair. “Oh, distressing beyond description !” “I think,” replied Mrs. Sinclair, “that when it is known, as it must be by a wife and family, that the

master of it has these peculiarities, which merely interfere with the common amusements or employments of the day, it is better to conform to them than to provoke complaint, and incur displeasure by opposition."

"Certainly: but then not to have the carriage!" "Being denied the use of a carriage and horses may often be inconvenient; and regularity, carried to that excess of punctuality which you describe, unavoidably occasions inconvenience to some of the parties concerned. But when we consider how much time is saved by the regular observance of stated hours for meals in a family, I could almost say it is a failing which leans to the side of virtue, and I own I should most cheerfully comply with this command of Sir Thomas's; and I dare say Lady Wills does."

"O yes—Why no, not exactly; for you know a lady cannot say how long she may be dressing for dinner; cannot tell exactly to a minute." "Then she had better allow herself half an hour for any extraordinary demands, than incur the frowns or reproofs

of her husband." "So I have often told her; but, between ourselves, she has not much respect for Sir Thomas."

Mrs. Sinclair, not wishing for any confidential communications, changed the subject, and spoke of the scenery around them; but as Mrs. Hopkins had no taste for simple and natural beauties, she soon took her leave.

"Mrs. Sinclair," said Mrs. Hopkins as she walked homewards with her daughter, "is a very agreeable woman certainly—but there is something in her I can't understand, and what I don't like." "Oh, she is very handsome, mamma," said Arabella, "and so is Miss Douglas." "Yes; handsome—both are handsome; but it strikes me there is something very satirical in Miss Douglas. I observed her smile a little several times, and could not tell at what; but I suppose at something we said or did. I would have you, Arabeila, be very much upon your guard before her, as I shall be, I can tell you." "O mamma, pray do not fear that I shall commit myself; I know better. But what a beauti-

ful trimming! I declare I thought they were real heart's eases." "Yes, very well; but Miss Anna Maria Wills to my mind paints better; her colours are richer and stronger, and her strokes more bold."

Presently they met Mrs. Foster, and all that passed at the visit was repeated; particular stress laid upon the satirical smile of Miss Douglas. "Well, I shall call however," said Mrs. Foster; "and if she smiles or looks so at me, I shall tell her my mind as sure as I am here, for I always will speak my mind. I have no notion of being laughed at by such people." "No, she did not laugh—it was only a smile: I cannot tell how, but it was a smile, and I did not know what she smiled at." "Indeed, mamma," said Arabella, who had a marvellous desire to visit them again, "she did not smile much. I thought she looked serious; I wanted sadly to ask her to play me a tune on the harp." "Oh, ten to one if she could have played; she would have said it was out of tune, by way of excuse. It strikes me there is a great deal of show there.

A grand piano forte open—books every where—writing-desks—pictures—flowers—and even some work lay upon the table—beautiful muslin work, as if Mrs. Sinclair had just put it down.” “ Well, I shall call and see these wonderful people,” said Mrs. Foster, “ and then you shall have my opinion.” “ Aye, do, do, and let us know what you think.”

The next day began the scrutiny of Mrs. Foster; and the same unaccountable *something* which checked in a great degree the volubility of Mrs. Hopkins, and so greatly perplexed her on what list of qualities to place it, had also its influence on Mrs. Foster. Even her candour was awed into a decent reserve, and she found no opportunity of speaking *her mind*. She looked around her in the hope of finding something to disapprove, but her eye only met with objects to admire.

Mrs. Sinclair, who possessed in a very extraordinary degree the talents for conversation, though she did not condescend to

any facetious familiarity, preserved that dignity of manner which, never presuming to take a liberty with another, prevents a liberty being offered. She yet had such a readiness of language, and such a peculiarly happy tact of discriminating character, that, without departing from herself, she could adapt her subjects and conversation to her visitors so as to delight whilst she inspired respect.

Mrs. Foster thought her a very agreeable woman, but certainly *proud*.—*Pride* was the *something* which poor Mrs. Hopkins could not find a term for. “However,” added Mrs. Foster with a self-satisfied air and tone of voice, as she seated herself in Mrs. Hopkins’s parlour, “I have no reason to say that; for she was extremely pleasant to me; and so was Miss Douglas to Catherine; I should not wonder if we were to be very intimate.” Mrs. Foster had not been so warmly patronized by Lady Wills, on account of her unfortunate talent of speaking her mind on all occasions, as Mrs. Hopkins had; and the preference shown to the latter had

occasioned certain emotions of envy and mortification to rankle in Mrs. Foster's mind, and frequently to burst forth into violent expressions ; she would in the most ingenuous terms speak her mind of Lady Wills to Mrs. Hopkins, and of Mrs. Hopkins to herself. She now believed an opportunity offered for retaliation ; and that she should be able, by establishing herself upon good terms with Mrs. Sinclair, to play her off upon Mrs. Hopkins against Lady Wills. It is true, Mrs. Sinclair had no title to boast of ; but she had lived in high style in Grosvenor-square, and, she said, looked much more of a lady than Lady Wills did—“and as for Miss Douglas, she is as far superior to any of the Miss Willses,—nay, to all of them put together,—as the sun is to a farthing rush-light.” She was sure Mr. Foster would admire her vastly, for he was so fond of fine women ! and Mrs. Sinclair appears quite the gentlewoman, though she was only drest in a plain white gown. “I declare I thought

she looked like a queen. I shall very soon make a party, and invite her niece to it."

"Her niece!" said Mrs. Hopkins scornfully.

"Yes, Mrs. Hopkins; her niece. I know what you mean, but I don't think her at all like her—not at all."—"O my stars!" exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins; "not like her!—Why, it struck me the first moment I saw her; and it must strike every one who does not wilfully shut her eyes." "I am not so keen as you, I suppose," said Mrs. Foster.

Mrs. Foster was one of those characters who imagine the greatest virtue consists in an openness of manner that holds the mirrors up to every one's view, whether it reflects personal deformity, mental incapacity, or any peculiarities of dress or manner. But, with all this love for truth, the qualities we most love and admire in others were not brought before her all-reflective mirror, and she loved to notice defects rather than beauties, and the disagreeable rather than the agreeable.

Her praise of Mrs. Sinclair arose as much from a spirit of opposition to Mrs. Hopkins, as from any genuine admiration she felt.

While these visits of curiosity and ceremony were passing, Julia and Ellen were almost daily associates; every day developed to each other their tastes and sentiments, and cemented more closely their bond of friendship.

"I almost believed myself," said Ellen, "of an ungrateful nature, or incapable of any attachment beyond that I entertain for my parents and brother; for, much as I have endeavoured to find pleasure in the society of Arabella Hopkins or Catherine Foster, I have never succeeded. I believe them very well meaning girls, particularly the latter; but I could not enjoy their conversation,—and I fear they have thought me fastidious or unkind."—"How have you employed, how have you amused yourself, Ellen?" "My dear mother was my monitress, till our sad misfortunes, so rapidly succeeding each other, rendered her incapable of at-

tending to me. I was then my father's pupil ; and, O Julia ! I fear you will think me an odd and perhaps an ungrateful girl, when I tell you that I had more pleasure in my father's than in my mother's instructions. I not only read to him, but I had access to his library, and I literally banqueted like a little book-worm on his pages. I had no taste or order in my selections ; I wished to read all, and I have frequently sat for an hour looking at them before I could determine what volume to read. I have wandered over the pages of Orlando Furioso simply because it told of high heroic deeds ; and my infant eye was delighted with the war horses and knights in armour that were represented in the engravings. Even Chaucer, though in black letter, I used to pore over ; and often I had lost myself and my wits amongst volumes I could not fully comprehend, but which delighted me from the kind of amazement they produced, and perhaps by the marvellous events they described. I used to give my whole soul to the plays of Shake-

spear. How often have I walked up and down the long grass walk in our garden (fortunately it is straight) with a volume of this immortal bard, forgetful of our hours for meals and even prayer! and when I have closed it, I have thought ‘ O never can I read any thing else! ’—But when I have in the folly of my heart talked of these things to my young companions here, they have laughed or wondered, and their mothers would tell me I should certainly lose my senses if I continued the habit of reading such odd books. My dear father, who used frequently to see the authors I was perusing, would only smile; and thus, as I was unchecked by him in my favourite pursuits, I could not feel much respect for the advice of others: so I grew up the strange girl you find me, Julia, believing myself to be so unlike any other human being, that I was neither formed to love or to be loved by any but my parents and my brother. O Julia, such a brother! so kind, so indulgent, so obedient, so good, so clever!—But you

will see him in a few weeks." "I am not only curious but anxious to see him; for goodness and talents combined form a character we all must love. But let me hear a little more of yourself, my dear Ellen; for, odd as you may have been, or as you fancy you are, I feel that I love you, and I am sure my aunt does: therefore you have gained two friends beyond the circle of your own family. Do you understand French or Italian? I know you draw." "I can read French—my brother taught it me when at home; but I am afraid I must confess that my passion for reading English authors made me prefer books in that language which I understood; and I submitted to the study of acquiring another, more to please my brother than to gratify myself. I associated with no one who spoke it, and therefore it was not useful; and in truth I believe my taste is too English to permit me to enjoy many French authors; I cannot like their poetry, though I often admire the sentiments. Of Italian I am totally ignorant, and I draw

very little, though you mentioned that as one of the things, the very few things, Julia, which I have attained. I possess no accomplishment of any kind : in truth, I am a plain unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised. Happy in this, I am not yet so old but I may learn."

" Happier in this, not bred so dull but you *may* learn!" replied Julia. " But you sing, Ellen, and sing sweetly." " They are wood notes wild," said Ellen ; " and though my simple songs delight my father and mother, they cannot please an ear of taste and science like yours, Julia." " We will not talk of my taste and science, Ellen. My aunt, who possesses both, loves the simple melody of your voice, and wishes you sometimes to sing with us." " Does she?" said Ellen : " If I have courage, I shall be delighted. How pleased will Edmund be if I am improved in singing, or any thing!" " Does he like music?" " It is a passion with him ; and much as he has applied himself to study, he has found some time to devote to music, and, I think, plays on the violin and sings very

finely." "We shall have charming concerts," said Julia. "I wish, Ellen, you would read French with me—I want an inducement to pursue it. And will you draw with me? I shall love every employment better if you participate in it." Ellen was happy to profit by her friend's offer of instruction; for so it really was, as Julia's education had been received from the very first instructors. Formed both upon a religious and moral basis, and under the immediate control and observance of her aunt, it had all the exterior polish that the highest accomplishments could bestow, and all the solidity that intellectual studies could promote. The mind was stored as well as graced; and whilst her person and manner had every attraction of fashion, the native charm of pure benevolence, cheerfulness, kindness, and playfulness, shone conspicuously in every act and word. To such a one neither Mr. nor Mrs. Herbert could refuse the society of their daughter; and they believed that she would derive advantages

from Julia such as their retired situation had prevented her from attaining; that her amusements would be varied, her ideas expanded, and that she would at the same time enjoy the social sweets of friendship. A part of every day was devoted to French, drawing, and singing; and when Ellen would lament that the obligation was solely hers, that she received all without imparting any pleasure, Mrs. Sinclair desired her to read to them, for here Ellen particularly excelled. To a voice of the sweetest modulation, a pronunciation elegant and correct, she added judgment and feeling. Mrs. Herbert would sometimes join the little party with her work, and Mr. Herbert take up the book to relieve Ellen.

Julia inquired what kind of girls the Miss Willses were. But Ellen said, though they were upon perfectly easy and familiar terms with them, there was no attachment of congenial minds; and that, as she could not either approve or admire, she had rather not describe them. Bertha, the youngest, she

said, who was about thirteen, though a sadly neglected child, was the only one she felt an interest in ; and she often wished she could play the gipsy and steal her away from her parents, who seemed to dislike her ; and her sisters were perfectly indifferent about her. The poor girl was therefore left to run wild about the house and grounds, and be the companion of the servants, who seeing her disliked by the family, and driven from the parlour, treated her with little respect in the kitchen. “ Does she feel this unkindness ? ” said Julia. “ She begins to feel it, I think,” replied Ellen ; “ but she is a very shy girl, and does not say much.”

Mrs. Sinclair had now her “ jog trot horse” and low open chaise ; and in roads so little frequented by travellers as those about them, she had no fear of driving herself and Julia, attended by a servant on horseback. In this manner they explored the beautiful lanes, admired the picturesque views, the little villages, and the neat cottages. Sometimes when a prospect of peculiar loveliness

attracted them, and they were unable to examine all its features in the common track, they would alight, and walk across a field or climb a hill. Ellen occasionally supplied the place of Julia, and, being better acquainted with the country, was the guide and entertaining companion of Mrs. Sinclair, who was pleased with these opportunities of more fully understanding her mind and character. Formed in retirement upon the strong base of virtue, with no model for imitation, it had at once simplicity, strength, and originality. Never having met with a companion whose tastes and pursuits assimilated with her own, and timidly shrinking from observation, she had acquired a habit of silence and reserve in the society of every person but her parents. In the first two or three interviews, Mrs. Sinclair could scarcely extract a sentence from her; and even Julia talked *to* her rather than *with* her. But they saw intelligence in her eye, read the language of a warm and feeling heart in the varied expression of her countenance, and saw the sweetness of her

temper in a mild and beautiful mouth, so that her silence never could be interpreted into vacancy or ignorance. But as her reserve wore off, and her character began to develop itself in its own unstudied language, they loved and admired its simplicity and energy ; they found how replete her mind was with fancy and information ; that she had talents which amply rewarded them for those attentions which had drawn them forth from their concealment. There was a peculiarity that pervaded her whole manner and conversation, but not the slightest affectation ; it was the charm of an original mind, acting from its native impulse, united to superior talents and fascinations. There was an *usefulness* that rendered Ellen valuable to her parents as well as neighbours ; an activity both of mind and body, that quickly perceived and as quickly executed. *She was never idle ; and it was wondered at by the young ladies of the village, “ how she could read so much, work so much, walk so much, do so much—there were only twenty-four hours*

in the day for her as well as for them; and she must sleep as well as they:—but they could not find time for half so many employments as she did, and they wondered how it could be!?

The secret might have been easily explained:—she was never idle; and from this habit of being constantly employed, she never felt any thing a task, any thing a business: her duties were amusements, and her amusements were instructions. Of this Mrs. Sinclair fully appreciated the value and beauty. However captivating may be the display of a woman's abilities, however liberal may be her benefactions, however strict her attendance on religious worship; if she neglect her domestic and relative duties as a wife, mother, daughter, or mistress of a family, her talents, charity, and religion are vain. Independent of the Sunday school, Mrs. Herbert had established a weekly one, where a limited number of children were regularly taught by a widow and her daughter who had once known better days, and to whom this appointment was now a comfort:

and maintenance. She and Ellen generally gave their attendance and instruction every day, and Mrs. Sinclair and Julia now added theirs. With their whole time at their own disposal, they considered it a duty, and found it a pleasure, to contribute a portion of it to the benefit of their fellow creatures. “I do not feel it enough, my Julia,” Mrs. Sinclair would say, “merely to give my pecuniary support; money is not the sole talent whose account we must one day render up; that of *time* will be still more rigorously demanded; and the hours we have wasted will appear a more awful charge against us than the money we have squandered. How large a part of it is frequently lost by numbers in idle wishes and absurd speculations, when they ought to think and reflect in order to act!”

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert not only felt attachment but gratitude towards Mrs. Sinclair, for the assistance which she gave to their benevolent endeavours to mitigate the evils of poverty by inculcating instruction, of

which they made religion the root, and morality the branches. But it was not only the mind which these amiable people endeavoured to inform, or the heart which they sought to amend ; they were equally attentive to every personal want, and in sorrow or suffering they ministered kindness and counsel, food and medicine.

The blessings of the poor had long followed Mr. and Mrs. Herbert and Ellen; and now they were extended to Mrs. Sinclair and Julia, who visited the cottages, inquired into the situation of the families, and with their own hands conferred their benefits ; soothing by their kindness as much as they relieved by their charity. In acts of mutual benevolence, and in the frequent intercourse which these occasioned between the inhabitants of the Rectory and of the White Cottage, approbation and respect gradually and insensibly increased into the warmest attachment ; and friendship thus cemented by virtuous habits cannot easily be shaken. Mrs. Hopkins no longer was solicitous to search

into the mystery attending Mrs. Sinclair or Julia, though in fact no mystery existed, but, as residents in London, they chanced to be strangers to all at Albany ; and though their names had probably appeared among the crowd of fashionables at routs and assemblies, they had not extended so far into the country, and if seen in the papers they were forgotten. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert saw them only as two amiable women, and as such respected and loved them ; but with Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Foster there was no end of wonderings !

The post-office at Albany was kept by a woman. Tormented by all the curiosity usually ascribed to her sex, few letters, and much leisure, gave her opportunities it was impossible to pass over, of a very close investigation into the affairs of her neighbours. Mrs. Sinclair's letters were amongst the number that were most scrutinized. She dared not break a seal ; but by a little female stratagem she contrived to peep in at the ends, and the discovery of a few words gave

a ready clue to many reports. Several coronets appeared on the seals, a mitre also was of the number: it was therefore soon circulated that Mrs. Sinclair was in correspondence with earls, viscounts, and a right reverend. Who could she be to have such great friends? The Willses were not yet arrived to satisfy these doubts; and while curiosity was in some more active than ever —at the Rectory the strangers had become friends, and were loved, cherished, and confided in. Ellen instructed Julia in the cultivation of garden flowers and shrubs, and it became her favourite pursuit. “I really blush at my ignorance,” said Julia, “and am afraid to ask for information, lest I should be thought to affect ignorance, and to wish to appear a town-bred miss. But you will not laugh at me, or suspect me of such folly, Ellen, even if I mistake a carnation for a sweet pea, &c., and therefore I submit myself to your guidance and instruction.” “As for Ellen,” said Mr. Herbert with a good-humoured smile, and patting her on the cheek, “she forms

amongst her flowers a little society, a little world of her own ; I dare not pluck a bud or a branch, lest I wound some ideal image, or some dear representative." " My dear father," said Ellen, " do not make me appear so very ridiculous. But I fear it is partly true ; the garden is my hobby horse as much as uncle Toby's bowling-green was his ; and surely like him I ride it, ' jostling no creature on my way.' " " You do, my dear girl," said her father, " and you shall ride it without rein or curb of mine. But tell me, Ellen," still jesting with her fancy, " who is this tree, this arbor *vitæ* ? " " It is," said she smiling, " Dr. ——. " " And why is it he ? " " May I not consecrate the *tree of life* to him who saved my mother ? " Mr. Herbert kissed her affectionately. " Dear girl ! " he exclaimed. " And this poplar, who is it ? " " Edmund my brother," said Ellen proudly and emphatically : " so does he tower above his sex as that tree above its brethren of the grove : so does he lift his graceful and aspiring head high above every other ; yet neither overshadowing

them by his superiority, nor humbling them by his eminence. In native dignity he stands alone *my pride.*" "And who is this honey-suckle next to Edmund? for I suppose I must not call even the *tree* poplar." "Laugh if you choose, my dearest father, since you do not chide. That little insignificant woodbine is myself; Edmund indulging my whim planted it there." "Well, my child," said Mr. Herbert, "like the good vicar of Wakefield, I cannot discourage those harmless illusions, which serve but to make us more happy. Julia, you may expect to be planted in this garden, and to grow beneath our eyes, either in the form of a tree, a shrub, or a flower." "Let me then be worn in your bosom," said Julia; "gather a little branch of me, and fear not that my spirit will complain; tear me to pieces if you will, but place a bit of me near your heart." "You will ever be there," replied Mr. Herbert. Julia took his hand, and pressed it in silent thankfulness.

The piano forte of Mrs. Sinclair and the

harp of Julia continued to charm their friendly visitors. Even Mrs. Herbert, whilst a tear stole down her cheeks, would feel her bosom soothed by the powers of music. Ellen sung with them, and her enchanting voice became more expressive and touching under the instructions of Julia. She also sang ; and when their voices mingled, the parents and the friends thought nothing could be sweeter.

The mitred letter which had been remarked at the post-office was soon followed by the noble writer himself ; and never was so extraordinary a sensation excited in Albany, as when his carriage was seen to drive through the village, and stop at the White Cottage.

It was soon rumoured that the Bishop of B—— and one of his daughters were to pass some days there, and that he would preach the following Sunday at the church. Perhaps not one of the parishioners had ever heard a bishop preach ; and early in the morning a numerous congregation had assembled, for the news circulated swiftly ; and every one in the neighbourhood who had a

horse to ride, a cart to drive, or a foot to walk upon, came to Albany. Expectation waited in awful silence when the bishop ascended the pulpit, and never was the dignity of the prelate or the simplicity of the man more impressively united. His language, though clear and comprehensive to the lowest capacity, possessed a sacred sublimity that charmed the highest. This great man and good preacher was the friend and guest of Mrs. Sinclair. Suspicion instantly vanished ; and it was now as much a wonder that she had condescended to return the visits of those who had called upon her, as it once was, whether they should condescend to call.

Mr. Herbert's family dined at the White Cottage during his lordship's visit ; and Mrs. Sinclair, Julia, and her noble guest and his daughter, honoured the Rectory with a visit also. The windows were filled with all eyes of the village, to see the bishop drive out Mrs. Sinclair in her low chaise, or walk with Julia hanging fondly and familiarly on his

arm. It was rumoured that he was a relation —he must be a relation, or he could not love them so much as he seemed to do ; for, when he met and parted from them, the servants said he embraced them both affectionately and tenderly, and almost shed tears when he bade them adieu.

Now was Mrs. Sinclair firmly established in the good opinions of the village. A bishop, and the Bishop of B——, had visited her, and his friendship could not come “in a questionable shape.” She therefore was really Mrs. Sinclair, the aunt of Julia ; had once lived in Grosvenor-square, and was come to reside at Albany for the benefit of her health and the pleasure of the country. The return of Lady Wills was not regarded as of any importance to Mrs. Sinclair’s reputation : all mystery had ceased, except as to the exactly ascertaining who were Julia’s parents, whether living or dead, and where living or where buried. All they knew—and this they now firmly credited—was, that she had really a claim to the appellation of niece to Mrs.

Sinclair, though she frequently and unreservedly would bestow upon her the fond and tender epithet of mother. And indeed her actions corresponded with her words; for never had a mother a more dutiful or attached daughter, anticipating her wishes, and with prompt obedience executing every command. Mrs. Sinclair was in ill health; country air had been for some time prescribed to her: but considering the education of Julia as of the most importance, she was unwilling to check its progress by a removal from the spot where she had the advantages of the best masters. She therefore remained in London till this was completed, and till nearly one winter of fashionable introduction into society had transpired. She then, at the earnest entreaties of Julia herself, and the positive injunctions of her physician, consented to remove into the country until her health was re-established. With resources both of elegant accomplishment and mental acquirement, Mrs. Sinclair and Julia felt assured that they should find no situation

(however retired) dull, or their hours heavy; and though Mrs. Sinclair feared that a young person just come from the gaieties of the metropolis, and accustomed to the society of those of her own age, might sometimes feel “an aching void” in her heart, or in her time; yet, from the state of her health, so pressing was the necessity for a trial, that she could no longer hesitate to make it; secretly however determining that, if she found Julia’s spirits depressed or her temper changed by retirement, she would sacrifice her own benefit and return again to society.

But even to doubt Julia was not to know her. Ardent and sanguine in her nature, she was yet patient and submissive under any restraint. Though with a fortitude that could sustain calamity, and heroism that would not shrink from any trial, she was tender in her affections and playful in her spirit. She enjoyed conversation and society —but she loved reading, and had such a variety of amusements in herself, that she was never weary of them. Above all, she possessed

an unvarying sweetness and cheerfulness of temper; and her aunt often would think her disposition was thus happily constituted, in order to meet the peculiar ordinations of Providence, and the trials that awaited her. Her person was formed in beauty's loveliest mould; and with the same look of dignity that her aunt possessed, what elevation of soul shone in her eye! what sweetness played in her mouth! and what grace and elegance adorned every action!

They had been about two months at Albany, with no other society than the rector's family, and occasional visits and calls from Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Foster and their daughters. These they would gladly have dispensed with, and thought them "more honoured in the breach than in the observance;" but Mrs. Sinclair particularly wished to avoid the appearance of *hauteur*, or the assumption of that superiority which would disdain an intercourse with any who solicited an acquaintance, when there were no moral motives for declining it.

She wished to be on good terms with all her neighbours, and though not too familiar she was easy and friendly.

When the time of their residence was one day mentioned by Mrs. Sinclair, she was delighted to hear Julia exclaim, “Two months, my aunt ! have we been two months at Albany ? They have then glided away on sandals of down, or old Time has worn two pair of wings ; it seems but a little day. I am rejoiced you came to Albany, for never have I thoroughly enjoyed existence till now ; no dread of morning visitors interrupting us every moment ; no formal dinners, long and tedious ; but *life, liberty, and fresh air!*” “But operas, balls, routs,—these are relinquished, Julia.” “Ah, true, my aunt, and I love the opera and love dancing ; but never have I found so much enjoyment in any one of these amusements, as I do in the conversation and affection of Ellen Herbert. Her mind is so cultivated, her judgement so good, her ideas so rapid, and her fancies so playful, that she seems to me to be in herself a

little world of variety ; and if I were to be doomed to spend my days in a desert, I should say, Give me my aunt and Ellen, and the desert will be a world." Mrs. Sinclair gave her one of her fondest looks and blessings. "I wonder," continued Julia thoughtfully, "if her brother is like her?" Mrs. Sinclair smiled. "And if he be, Julia, what then?" Julia blushed,—but gaily said, "Why, then he must be very *agreeable*. But come, my dear aunt, shall we walk about the garden, or drive out this morning? I am ready for either."

A few evenings afterwards, Mrs. Sinclair having letters to write, Julia and Ellen went out for a long walk. In returning homeward the sun had set, and they were leaning upon a gate, watching its radiant reflections in the sky, when they were startled by the trampling of horses at a little distance.

"But soft! what messenger of speed
Spurs hitherward his panting steed?"

said Julia. In a moment the rider had turned the corner of the road where they were stand-

ing, and came directly in sight. "'Tis Edmund, 'tis my brother," exclaimed Ellen. He had thrown his reins into the hands of his servant, and was dismounted just in time to catch her in his arms. Her head sunk on his bosom, and a shower of tears relieved the effect which surprise and joy had on her quickly-feeling heart. "My dear silly Ellen," he said in a tone of tender reproach, "why, you are the same little trembler you ever were." Then turning to Julia, "Miss Douglas, I presume?" She curtsied. "Julia," said Ellen, "forgive me; I had forgotten you." Julia took her hand with a smile which quite forgave her—and they proceeded homeward.—"My father and mother?" said Edmund in an accent of inquiry.—"Quite well," returned Ellen. "And did you not expect me this evening? I wrote." "We have received no letter; we knew you would soon be here, but not this evening. Welcome, a thousand times welcome. And you, Rover," said Ellen to a favourite terrier, the constant companion of her bro-

ther, "welcome to you also, my faithful fellow."

In their way to the Rectory they passed the White Cottage; and Julia, bidding them adieu at the gate, ran into the house. "Well, my dear aunt, I have seen him—seen this son, this brother, this Edmund!" "And what think you of him, Julia? Is he as handsome as we have heard?" "I can scarcely tell whether he is handsome or not; I listened more than looked. Oh! never did I hear a voice so kind, so sweet, as he chid and soothed Ellen, who was greatly agitated at his unexpected appearance. Such a brother must be a blessing;—would that *I* had one!" said she sighing. "Julia," said Mrs. Sinclair, "this is a weak and an idle wish; what we have not it is generally useless to lament; and what cannot be attained it is folly to desire. Rejoice that your friend has such a brother; but do not imply a discontented feeling, my beloved girl, by wishing him your brother." "Not *him*, my aunt," replied Julia quickly,—"not *him* my

brother." "I understand you, Julia," said Mrs. Sinclair; "you wish you had *a* brother; that you were not such a forlorn being as you find yourself with me." "O my dear aunt! pardon the hastily expressed wish. I feel it must have appeared like discontent; but indeed it was but for a moment I saw the happiness of Ellen—it was of a kind I had never known—and I fear I almost envied her—at least I wished it mine. But though I have no brother, I am already rich in blessings. I have my aunt, and many many dear friends; and I will strike my harp in their praise," said she, sitting down to the instrument;—"and do you, my dear aunt, join me in a duet."

In witnessing the rapture and emotion of Ellen at the sudden meeting with her brother, Julia experienced sensations of astonishment. She could not help thinking how sweet must be the ties of affection and consanguinity united:—she had no brother, no sister, no relation but her aunt; and though she fondly loved and respected her, yet she

was the only one with whom she was connected by bonds of nature ; and as she reflected upon the different situation of herself and her friend, she could not help feeling comparatively forlorn ; and hence arose the wish she hastily and impulsively expressed. But Julia's disposition was not of a kind to encourage discontent, or express repinings ; her spirits were naturally buoyant ; but if at any times depressed, the sweetness of her temper, and the apprehension of distressing her aunt, taught her to forbear every species of complaint ; and a *wish* was the utmost she ever uttered. In a little time she found the powers of melody had restored her spirits to their wonted equilibrium ; her “bosom's lord again sate lightly on his throne ;” and all she had felt vanished “like a mist that melts on the sunny hill.”—Mrs. Sinclair understood what had passed in her mind, and secretly rejoiced at the little victory over herself.

The next morning the whole family from the Rectory called at the White Cottage.—

"I have reserved to myself the pleasure of introducing my son to Mrs. Sinclair," said Mr. Herbert as he entered the room ; "and if he inherits his father's taste and sentiments, he will feel such an introduction an honour and a pleasure." Mrs. Sinclair smiled at the gallantry of the good rector, whilst she admired the graceful elegance of his son ; and could not wonder at the pride of his parents, the fondness of his sister—or that Julia wished she had such a brother.

After this introduction was over, "Let me," said Ellen, "present to each other my brother and my friend. I have been chidden for omitting it yesterday ; but I was so surprised, so agitated, so overcome with joy, that I forgot every thing but the cause of it." Julia's cheek was dyed with the deepest crimson :—"Should I have blushed thus at a London presentation ?" thought she : "O no !—there it is a mere matter of form."

It was impossible to see Edmund Herbert without admiration. To a figure of the most perfect manly symmetry was added a

countenance equally handsome. Yet fine as were his features, their expression constituted their greatest charm. Yet his person, incomparable as it was, derived its chief power of attraction from his manner; he was at once well-bred and easy, attentive to forms without formality, dignified without haughtiness, and fashionable without affectation. In conversation his subjects were well chosen; his language correct yet unstudied, and often sportive but never trifling; delicate in his attentions to women, respectful to his parents, and affectionate to his sister: and to these high qualities of mind and person was superadded a voice both in speaking and singing peculiarly expressive: its deep and mellow tones delighted every ear, and penetrated every heart.

Such was Edmund Herbert, who was now come to pass the college recess at home. "Three months with my beloved brother!" said Ellen: "three months of happiness!" and the most animated joy was diffused over her countenance.

Edmund was destined for the church. His early inclinations would have led him to pursue a military life ; but as this was opposed by his parents, he solaced himself with study, gained several prizes, and became an honour to the college where he was placed. Though thwarted in his first wishes, he never expressed a murmur ; but considering it his duty to devote himself to the plans pointed out by those to whom he owed his being, and knowing that the many losses they had sustained in their children had more closely endeared them to those that remained, he stifled every selfish feeling, and not only reasoned but acted like a philosopher.

The family of Sir Thomas Wills was daily expected at his seat at Albany. The day arrived, — and post-coaches, post-chariots, and post-chaises, fraught with the Willses and their trunks, band-boxes, and servants, rattled through the village.

It is now necessary to introduce to my readers the *dramatis personæ* of the mansion.

Sir Thomas Wilis was really of an old and respectable family ; could boast some ancestral consequence, when tilts and tournaments, armour and gilt spurs, were the amusements, the costumes, and rewards of youth. Through successive generations, from plebeian marriages, luxury and effeminate habits, the race of the Willses had degenerated both in size of person and dignity of character ; and though Sir Thomas still showed with pride the armour that his great great great great and many times more *great* great grandsire wore, which was large enough for John of Gaunt, he could scarcely lift even the visor. “ ‘Tis surprising,” he would say, “ to think what men were, and what they are now-a-days ; why, I am a pigmy to the Sir Thomas who wore this, and I don’t think George will be much bigger ; we don’t drink ale and eat roast beef enough, that’s my opinion.”

Sir Thomas had received an *indulgent* education from an indulgent mother ; that is, he was never compelled to learn any thing

he did not choose, and he did not choose to learn any thing. His father died when he was very young; and as he was to be the sole comfort of his mother, he was never to be vexed, though perhaps no child ever shed so many tears, or fancied so many hardships. He had a tutor in the house, who for four years enjoyed his sinecure, and then accompanied his pupil to Eton, where he assisted him through his labours. College was thought of no use. “Sir Thomas would possess a very large income, therefore why should he be teased with any more study?” said his judicious mother. “I wish him to be a gentleman, and therefore he shall travel; he will then learn without the trouble of reading.” And Sir Thomas went abroad. He travelled through France, saw the Louvre at Paris; he went through Italy, saw St. Peter’s at Rome, Mount Vesuvius at Naples, and the Gallery at Florence. He travelled into Switzerland, saw the Glaciers; he went into Germany, and saw the falls of the Rhine; and then he came back again to England a

travelled gentleman. “Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits;” but Sir Thomas might as well have kept at home, for any advantage his wits had derived from travel. “It was all wonderful,” he would say, “really it was surprising to see what a number of curiosities there were at Paris, what a prodigious size Saint Peter’s was, what a great smoke there was from Mount Vesuvius, and what a quantity of cinders it threw up; what a beautiful gallery there was at Florence; what a deal of snow and ice upon the Glaciers, and what a large river was the Rhine!”

It was thought proper that Sir Thomas should marry; and he selected, or rather his mother selected, Miss Gordon, a fair girl of sixteen, with a good fortune, who had just left school, and was as much delighted to become at once a lady, and with an establishment of her own, as she was to quit the nursery for a fashionable school. Sir Thomas had not the least dislike to her, nor she to him; they married therefore with a better pro-

spect of happiness than people thus assorted by parents generally do ; and continued to live upon very amicable terms, except now and then when Sir Thomas would have his own way and my lady a hysteric : but there really was never any very loud quarrelling, any changing of apartments, or any threats of separation ; they went to London at a proper season, and regularly returned in the summer, or made an excursion for the benefit of sea air, or to enliven and enlighten the minds of their daughters by the sights and scenery of their native country.

Lavinia, their eldest daughter, was beautiful as the finest form and features could make her ; but uninformed by mind, she looked as cold and inanimate as a statue. She moved elegantly but mechanically ; every thing she practised had been assiduously taught ; every thing she repeated was by rote ; she believed herself beautiful, for she had been told she was so, and thought that she had only to be seen to be admired.

Lady Wills had penetration enough to

discern that her daughter was deficient in those charms that render women dear and valuable as companions; but she flattered herself, and she flattered her daughter also, that the attractions of person would soon secure her a great alliance. For this purpose she was taught to bend her body in the most bewitching attitude, to present her hand in a graceful manner, to direct her eyes with the most expressive softness upon the person who spoke to her, to smile just to a certain extent of mouth which displayed a dimple, and to look as if she could weep when she wished to show sensibility. But schooled as she was in the science of the graces, Lavinia had passed the age of thirty without a single proposal of marriage; she was brought into public, gazed at, admired, flattered, and forgotten.

Sacharissa, the second daughter, about a year younger, possessed an equal degree of beauty, but of a more commanding character; and whilst her sister sighed and languished in the drawing-room, and swept her

white arms over the harp gracefully and discordantly, Sacharissa was in the stable with her favourite horse, caressing her father's hounds, or practising with her bow and arrow; but alas! her beauty was brought to an untimely end at the age of seventeen. In attempting a desperate leap as she was one day hunting, she was thrown from her horse, and with a mangled countenance conveyed into the nearest cottage. Time, however, repaired in some measure the ravages of accident; and the domestic habits which a long confinement to the house insensibly created, tamed that impetuosity and daring, that love of hunting and deeds of high enterprise, which had formerly distinguished her; and she softened into something of a Lavinia. Though but small traces of beauty were visible to impartial eyes, her own were more favourable in their decision, and she hoped yet, "with all her imperfections on her head," to be married before her elder sister. She had more vivacity, and found that the beauty of Lavinia was often

deserted for the pleasure of a little lively chat with her. Her features, it is true, were changed, but her eyes still remained entire; and with these she imagined she shot forth a whole artillery of flames and darts from Cupid's magazine of mischief. In the bridge of her nose there had been a slight breach, but tolerably well repaired; and it was still high, lofty and commanding, something like that described in the pictures of William the Conqueror—therefore, she thought, a conquering nose. One side of her face was very tolerable indeed; and as *she* knew which this was, she generally contrived to present it to the spectators, and fire principally from this eye, shading, as did Poppaea the wife of Nero, the other by a drooping feather or veil. But all these little stratagems to win the hearts of the other sex had failed; and poor Sacharissa had nearly reached that terrible climax of unmarried life, the age of thirty, as unsolicited and unloved as Lavinia. But she did not submit to her destiny with so much fortitude, so much

patience, or so much apathy. Lavinia still looked kindly and pensively, and still practised every air that had been taught her; she was a piece of mechanism, so worked up as to be always ready to be set in motion; she was neither offended nor mortified; she was surprised she was not married, as her mother had so often told her she must soon be; but she had no ill-humour, and surprise was all she felt when she felt any thing. Sacharissa began to be indignant at the neglect she experienced, and hated all men, because none had loved her.

Anna Maria, the third daughter, had less beauty, but not less vanity, than her sisters. She very early read novels and romances, and always arrayed herself in the dress, and assumed the character, of her last favourite heroine. She was alternately the majestic Cecilia, the artless Evelina, the playful Glorvina, the intellectual Corinna, and a thousand others; but when she had read Scott's matchless poems, she suddenly became a Margaret or a Lady Heron, a Clara or a

Constance ; she had a little vocabulary of her own ; said *iss* for *yes* ; contended for the propriety of the pronunciation of some words, because she thought it pretty ; wrote what she called poetry ; talked of sentiment and Platonic love ; played on the harp, and, as she thought, sung.

Deborah Ruth, the fourth daughter, was so called in compliment to a rich friend, who proposed herself as godmother on condition that she received these unpoetical titles, for which she promised to make her an ample compensation at her death ; and indeed the calamity of bearing the burden of such barbarous names throughout one's life requires some mitigation : the lady thought so—her request was complied with, and her promise fulfilled. Deborah Ruth was therefore independent, had 20,000*l.* at her own disposal ; and though she resided with her parents, she had her own exclusive servants, drove a curricle, and indulged herself in all her inclinations, however extraordinary or expensive. She particularly devoted herself to the

science of chemistry, attended Sir H. Davy's lectures at the Institution when in London, had a laboratory furnished with every necessary apparatus for the analysing, solving, and concocting the different earths and fluids, vegetable, animal, and mineral bodies, which she could collect ; and to see her in the performance of her various experiments, the simple and credulous might have imagined her in the midst of some mystic rites, and attributed to her, as they formerly did to Roger Bacon, dealings with supernatural agents. She had not despaired of discovering the philosopher's stone, and the universal panacea. She talked of oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen gas ; of all that ended in *ous* and *ic* ; of caloric substances ; of the nine earths, silica, alumina, zirconia, glucina, yttria, barytes, strontian, lime, and magnesia ; alkalies, acids, salts, combustibles, and metals ; and with these

“ She amaz'd the unlearn'd, and made the learned smile.”

Sir Thomas was very fond of agriculture,

and Deborah easily persuaded him what considerable knowledge he would gain for the improvement of his lands, by the study of chemistry also. He was pleased to have something clever to do, something clever to talk of, and entered with avidity into the scheme proposed, and into all the analyses necessary to perfect him in the science of agriculture. He would have a laboratory also, where samples of manure and earths, fluids gaseous and aqueous, were daily introduced, diffusing so many odours throughout the house, that “not all the perfumes of Arabia” could overcome them. Poor Lady Wills deluged her rooms with lavender water, steeped her handkerchief in otto of roses; but Sir Thomas’s and Deborah’s laboratories prevailed over all. It was in vain to expostulate, he would have his own way in this “useful science,” and “no one need turn up their nose at it if they were not more nice than wise.”

George Frederic Augustus Thomas was the fifth child, the son and heir and hope of

the house of Wills. Born on the same day as our beloved regent, Lady Wills insisted upon his being called by the same names, and not Thomas as had been intended. Sir Thomas expostulated ; “ all his ancestors had been Thomases ; there never was a Sir any body Wills, but a Sir Thomas, and Thomas it must be.” My lady wept, Sir Thomas entreated ; My lady had a hysterick, Sir Thomas consented—and George Frederic Augustus Thomas was baptized ; for the worthy baronet, much as he loved his wife, had a something pertinacious and positive in his nature, and, unwilling totally to give up the ancestral distinction, whispered to the clergyman to add Thomas ; for, though last, it was better than entirely omitted. When in the course of time the discovery was made by her ladyship, the shock was terrible ; but as Sir Thomas wisely observed “ What’s done cannot be undone”—the lady as wisely acquiesced, stipulating only that he should answer to the name of George.

The difference of tastes and opinions, that

distinguished the sisters in all their habits, extended even to the fancy of a name ; and whilst by his parents he was denominated *George*, one sister would call him *Frederic*, another *Augustus*, and Deborah called him *Thomas*. These various titles perplexed the object of them as well as the hearers, and made him appear almost as questionable a character as John alias — alias — alias — alias.

George Frederic Augustus Thomas at a proper age had a private tutor, was sent to Eton (because Sir Thomas had been there), and from thence to Oxford. He was not distinguished for his abilities or application ; but he had good humour, and was free from any vicious propensities.

Henrietta, the next in succession, was moderately pretty, moderately wise, and moderately accomplished ; she played a little and sung a little, understood a little of French and a little of drawing ; but had a marvellous desire to appear clever and agreeable ; and talked a great deal to every person, and upon every subject, betraying her ignorance whilst

she fancied she was displaying her judgment. But her desire of obliging rendered her generally more liked than her sisters, and her follies and absurdities were forgiven for the sake of her good humour.

Laura and Lauretta, aged seventeen, were twins—and, though sickly in their infancy, became tolerably healthy as they grew up. Dressed precisely in the same manner, it was difficult to distinguish one from the other, but by their bracelets—one of which was clasped with a portrait of Sir Thomas, and the other with that of Lady Wills: hence they received the appellation of papa's darling and mamma's darling. Fondness and indulgence seemed striving for ascendancy in the breasts of the parents, and it was as difficult to tell what darling was the most spoiled, as to distinguish one from the other. Though it was expressly ordered that they were to receive every thing in the same proportion, and if possible at the same moment, yet their own contentions too often disturbed the order enjoined; and whilst they pro-

duced a beautiful and harmonious effect by their dress, fondness and affection before admiring visitors ; in the nursery, quarrels and dissensions were perpetually arising, and proved that, however twins by birth, they were not twins in heart. Their personal resemblance in face, size, and height, continued undiminished until the age of twelve; when no longer “like to a double cherry seeming parted,” one suddenly started up like a poplar, leaving the other like a little dwarf shrub below her. This was an insult not to be endured ; Laura could not forgive her sister the many inches she had risen above her; and their animosity strengthening, complaints were referred to mamma by her darling, and the same to papa by his—and “Kiss and make it up” was the injunction hourly repeated.

Charles, now fifteen, was the next child, healthy, spirited, active, and good-humoured, full of frolic and fun, the delight of his father, the pride of his mother, and the dread of his sisters, upon whom he never

failed to play off his mischievous tricks whenever he was at home for the holidays.

Bertha was the youngest, and at the time this narrative commences was between thirteen and fourteen, though still denominated by her parents "the child." In her infancy she was the plainest of any of the family, to whom she scarcely bore the least resemblance. She was extremely brown, with dark eyes and hair, and so unlike both the Willses and the Gordons, that she appeared almost an alien to their blood, and, strange to say, really became so to their affections.

"I cannot think who she is like," said Lady Wills. "Nor I," replied Sir Thomas, "unless it was my great aunt Gertrude by my mother's side, who was run away with: she had black eyes, I think—but the Willses are all fair." "And so are the Gordons, Sir Thomas. As for being run away with, that child will never find any one to give himself that trouble. I wonder how any person can admire black eyes and a dark complexion."

Poor Bertha's dark eyes and tawny hue

were faults that her parents could not forgive : she was therefore consigned to the care of servants, seldom permitted to come into the drawing-room, or indulged with a kind look or a kind word either from her parents or sisters. All regarded her as a stranger, as an alien, almost as a child of colour. The servants seeing her thus disregarded treated her with disrespect, and she wandered from nursery to kitchen, and from kitchen to nursery, solitary and unattached. Her twin sisters had had a governess; but when they were old enough to mix in society she was dismissed, as it was not worth the expense of keeping her for "*the child*," Lady Wills said, who would never learn any thing ; and Bertha had been left about a year to follow her own inclinations, so long as she did not obtrude herself too much into the presence of the family. Her inclinations led her principally into the stable-yard, among the dogs and horses ; but she could not visit these favourites without encountering the grooms and servants. She used

therefore to retire into the room which had formerly been the school-room, and, with such books as she could find, sit reading for hours.

In this apartment there was an old instrument, and for the sake of amusement she contrived to teach herself the notes, and by dint of application could play several airs. She even attempted to sing ; and had she been *a fair girl*, instead of a brown one, Lady Wills would have been proud to cultivate a voice of such promise as Bertha's. But she had never heard her sing, and indeed seldom speak, and still more seldom had she seen her smile.

Discouraged and disregarded, she now almost shunned the family as much as they avoided her ; and if summoned into her mother's room, or the parlour, she would go so slowly, with her head down and her shoulders up, that she was generally dismissed with some remark upon her awkwardness, or a reproof upon her reluctance. Her only happiness was during the holidays when her brother Charles was at home. Her eyes

and complexion and awkward manner had no influence over his affection ; he would even say, “ If Bertha did not hold down her head and look so glum, she would be the best looking of you all.” Such remarks did not tend to bring poor Bertha more into favour with her sisters.

Charles did not understand why she spent her time so much alone, but partly thought it was, as they had asserted, because she was ill-humoured and shy in the parlour—“ Not that I ever saw her ill-humoured in my life,” he said; “ nor is she shy to me,—so I will go to her.”

“ I can’t think,” said Laura, “ how she spends her time up in that garret, for the school room is no better.”—“ Why, I will tell you,” replied Charles: “ she reads all the old books you have left, French, English, and Italian, and she plays on the old piano, and sings better than any of you.”—“ Dear me ! Charles, what are you talking about ?”—“ I am saying nothing but what is true,” said

Charles, "and I only wish you would go and hear her." "I shall do no such thing," said *the twins*.

"I desire," said Lady Wills, "you will talk no more about her, Charles. If Bertha was a good girl, and like her sisters, she should be as much with me, though she is only a child; for every body knows how I dote upon my children. But she has no affection, and is really so awkward, so sulky, and so uncouth, that at present she is better where she is."

Charles was not so young, or so weak, as to be entirely deluded by this sophistry. He did not quite understand why Bertha should be banished, and left entirely to herself, and he felt there was something wrong and unkind in it. "Poor girl!" he thought—"if she is awkward and sulky when she is with my sisters, they don't go the right way to cure her. I am sure she loves me, and I'll go to her, however."

One day he found her in an agony of grief, weeping over and fondling a dead

kitten, which had been her little pet and companion for some weeks.

"Why, how is this?" said Charles. "O Charles, Charles! Deborah has been making an experiment upon my kitten. She has pumped all the breath out of its poor little body, and cannot pump it in again: she gave it to Jenny to throw away."—"Has she?" said Charles. "Well, then, I shall see what can be done for her :" and catching up the kitten he was rushing out of the room. "O! stop, stop!" cried Bertha: "don't take it away, don't take it from me." "Why, it can't feel now, Bertha," said Charles in a tender accent: "if it could, do you think I would take it, I would hurt it?" "No, no, I know you would not. Take it then, Charles :" and she again sobbed violently.

Presently her brother returned—"Well, I have done for some of her things, however," said he. "What have you done, Charles? I hope, no mischief, no harm to Deborah?" "Why, what business had she

with your kitten ? No; it was not I ; it was the kitten that has revenged itself, though it is dead, and that has broken her receiver and a few other of her rattle-traps." "I am sorry for it," replied Bertha, "because she will be so angry ! and she did not think of vexing me, perhaps. But my poor poor little kitten, it was all I had in the world," again sobbed Bertha. "Come come," said Charles soothing her, "don't cry any more, Bertha ; I will give you something that you will love as well as you did the kitten, and that will love you a great deal better." "My kitten loved me," said Bertha : "it lay in my lap and in my bosom, it licked my hands and face, and purred, and played with me, and I am sure it knew me." "Well, never mind it now. I will give you a dog, a nice little dog, I know where to get one, and you shall call it Carlo for my sake." "Oh, but my mamma will never let me have a dog, to live with me up stairs," said Bertha. "But she need not know it." "Oh, but she will know it ; and I must not, dare not have it." "But

you shall," said Charles: and after a few moments of thought, "I've hit upon it: it shall be *my* dog, Bertha, and I leave it with you to take care of for me; and then let us see who will dare to say any thing about it."

The boy knew his power over his parents, and in the family; but he had too good a heart and temper to exercise it offensively towards them: he loved mischief, and he loved Bertha: he saw she was unnoticed; and he had the courage, because he knew he had the power, to soften the severity of her lot.

Whilst he was consoling his poor sister, and promising her a new favourite whom nobody dared to molest, he heard a violent clamour in the gallery, and his name loudly vociferated by Deborah. "Come this instant, sir," she exclaimed, "come and tell me what you have done." "What, don't you know?" replied Charles tauntingly. "Good God, sir!" continued Deborah, for she was not scrupulous in her ejaculations and apostrophes, "what do you mean by breaking my receiver and my retort?" "To retort

upon you, Deborah, the cruelty you have shown to Bertha in killing her kitten. But it was the kitten that broke it after all," said he carelessly. "I conjured up its ghost, and sent it flying amongst your things in order to revenge itself the death it had received at your hands. That's what I did. So now what do you say?" "Say? Why, that you are a most abominable, diabolical—" "Stop, stop, Deborah! If you say any more, if you provoke me, I will go again into your laboratory and finish what I have only begun." "Do if you dare, sir." "Don't *dare* me, Deborah; for I can tell you, if you do, if you ever touch any thing again that belongs to poor Bertha, or vex her in any way, I *will* too:" and away he flew, leaving Miss Deborah swelling with passion, and apprehensions lest some further mischief should be practised upon her property. In this instance, however, Charles only threatened: he felt he had sufficiently revenged the cause of Bertha for this time, and he had no malice in his nature.

This event occurred during the last holidays he was at home ; and finding that Charles was become the champion of his youngest sister, a little more attention was paid her by her mother, who so doted upon this boy, and so indulged him, that, had he not possessed a good disposition and good sense, his power might have been unlimited throughout the house.

Bertha was now oftener admitted into the parlour with her sisters, was rather better dressed ; and though she was never called my love or my darling, (except before company,) she was not so pettishly spoken to as "*child*."

Such was the situation of Sir Thomas's family, and such its members, at the time of their return to Albany ; and now was the opinion of Mrs. Hopkins respecting Mrs. Sinclair to be established by that of Lady Wills. She therefore scarcely slept all night, so anxious was she to inquire and to learn every circumstance that might be known of her and Julia, and of their affairs. In the

morning, as early as she could with any propriety, she bustled into her lilac pelisse ; and though the sun was flaming in Cancer—and though the good lady, like Johnny Gilpin, “carried weight,” she yet toiled up the long sandy hill that led to the mansion ; and after uttering a thousand kind welcomes to the lady and her daughters, in return for the civilly cool reception bestowed upon her, she was happy to find herself safely seated in the breakfast room. She assured her ladyship that there had been no spirit, no life, no pleasure of any kind since their departure; that every body had seemed dead; but now they revived again : she was delighted to see how well her ladyship and all the young ladies looked,—though poor Lady Wills declared she had a shocking cold, and the young ladies were all dying with fatigue. However, it was all one to Mrs. Hopkins: she came furnished with a dose of flattery, and was determined to administer it, that the ladies might be in good humour, and disposed to be communicative upon the subject of Mrs. Sinclair. She was

meditating in what manner to introduce her name, when Lady Wills relieved her by inquiring who had taken the White Cottage, as in passing it she perceived it was inhabited. Then did Mrs. Hopkins give utterance to all which laboured in her bosom.

"Mrs. Sinclair, with her niece Miss Douglas—but who they are no one exactly knows—pray does your ladyship?" "Sinclair—Sinclair—Douglas," repeated Lady Wills several times to herself in a tone of careless recollection. "I cannot recollect such names upon my list, nor do I know such upon any other." "I thought as much," said Mrs. Hopkins quickly and conceitedly, "I thought as much: from the first I suspected them, and always said so: but somehow they kept me—I know not how, I did not like to say all I thought—but now your ladyship knows nothing of them I am quite sure, though the Bishop of B—— has visited them." "Has the Bishop of B—— visited them?" inquired Lady Wills. "Then it must be Mrs. Sinclair, sister of General Sinclair, who, dying in the

East Indies, left her a very considerable fortune which he acquired there. The bishop was his most intimate friend." "But there is a niece," said Mrs. Hopkins, "Miss Douglas! does your ladyship know her?" "I really cannot charge my memory with the names of all the misses whom I meet—but, Lavinia, perhaps you may recollect a Miss Douglas?" "The beautiful Miss Douglas? O yes, mamma, I remember her: she was brought out at the beginning of this season." "She blazed upon us suddenly like a comet," said Sacharissa, "and as suddenly disappeared: but in what region she sunk we never knew; it was reported she was gone into the country." "Oh, I remember her," replied Lady Wills: "she was at Lady Courtney's grand assembly with Mrs. Sinclair. I shall visit them immediately." "But who is Miss Douglas?" "That is no concern of mine," said Lady Wills carelessly. "Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins with well feigned rapture, "how delighted I am to find they are what they ought to be! though appear-

ances at first might be against them.” “How so?” inquired Lady Wills coolly; for sometimes she had a petty pride and pleasure in piquing the forward and conceited Mrs. Hopkins, and in attesting her own superiority, “pray how so?” “Why, your ladyship knows they took the house, and nobody knew who they were—then they furnished it so handsomely, and nobody could tell where the money came from.” “And pray,” said Lady Wills scornfully, “whose business was it to inquire? Let me tell you, good woman, you live in this village till you have not two ideas in your head; and all which you cannot account for as plainly as you cast up a tradesman’s bill is marvellous and suspicious. I shall call on Mrs. Sinclair to-morrow.”

The contemptuous epithet of ‘good woman,’ the implication cast upon her understanding, her want of discrimination and liberality of opinion, rankled in her mind; but smoothing her countenance she replied, “her ladyship must know better than she did in every

respect—Mrs. Sinclair and Miss Douglas were charming people, as she would find :" and mortified and disappointed she took her leave. “*Good woman*” still swelled in her bosom, and she resolved she would not be such a good woman for the future as she had been to Lady Wills, nor carry her the tittle tattle of the village. But such resolutions formed by such a character are not durable ; and a few smiles, familiar nods, and civil speeches of Lady Wills soon rendered her as courteous and communicative as ever. In such a village, what could Lady Wills do without her ? Her mind would stagnate for want of exercise. With vacant characters, any gossip is preferable to no news.

The proposed visit of her ladyship was in a few days paid ; and she found Mrs. Sinclair and Julia the very identical persons whom she had stated they were. Delighted at such an acquisition in Albany—to find two of her own *world* (as she termed it) in such a desert—she rather more profusely than was her custom poured forth hopes of fre-

quent intercourse and friendly intimacy. Though Mrs. Sinclair did not meet these flattering testimonies of approbation with very evident marks of encouragement, she received them with some acknowledgements; for, ever anxious for the happiness of Julia, she thought that in the numerous family of the Wilses there might be some who would be pleasant to her, and occasionally vary the monotony of their amusements, and give a little novelty to their society. But a very short time served to convince them both, that there might be intimacy without friendship, and intercourse without sympathy.

In so contracted a circle as Albany presented, visits were frequently interchanged. Mrs. Sinclair found Lady Wills in general terms a well-meaning woman, though in her family partial to some, and therefore unjust to others; indolent and ostentatious, but indulgent and liberal. She never refused the aid of her purse if appealed to, but would have thought a moment of personal attention

to the sufferings of a fellow creature a sacrifice of her time, and a stigma upon her dignity. She wished every one well, and gave money to those who asked for nothing more.

Julia endured with good humour and good breeding the frivolous conversation of the Miss Willses, and was even amused with their eccentricities. There was a sufficient variety of character to afford her entertainment for half an hour ; and then with what delight did she turn to Ellen, to that rich and inexhaustible vein of sense and imagination that ran through her mind ! Edmund also was now fixed at home for three months ; and reading, walking, and music furnished occupation and amusement for every hour. With him for their guide and protector, Mrs. Sinclair with Julia or Ellen and sometimes Mrs. Herbert took a wider circuit in their rides, and not a wood or lane or field remained unexplored by foot or carriage.

Mrs. Herbert's health and spirits began to revive under the influence of gentle exercise, and rational, cheerful and amusing so-

ciety ; while the kindest feelings of her heart expanded towards her new and estimable friends. Her mind was soothed, and her soul elevated, as she listened to the pious and sublime strains of Handel in the fine and rich voice of Julia, while with maternal pride and pleasure she heard her own little Ellen unite her touching tones in a simpler strain, and her beloved Edmund assist these concerts both by his instrumental and vocal skill.

The son observed the beneficial effect which Mrs. Sinclair and Julia had upon his mother, and his regard for them partook of as much gratitude as tenderness. Of Mrs. Sinclair's wealth Lady Wills had circulated a lavish report. Her Indian riches must be immense, and it was believed that she might have paved her rooms with rupees. Julia, however she was, was considered her heiress :— and Edmund regarded her as he would “a bright particular star,” admirable, but unattainable. This idea was established in his mind very soon after his first introduction to

Julia, and proved in a great measure the preserver of his peace. He who has early habituated himself to combat with his wishes, who has, as Edmund had, once conquered powerful inclinations, may still by the same exertions suppress the feelings of his heart, if he cannot quite subdue them. Honour and pride were two powerful principles in his mind : for the sake of riches he would not barter the integrity of his affections, or impose upon the credulous and unsuspecting. But those who looked on Julia could never suppose that the fortune her aunt intended to bestow upon her was the charm that attracted ;—yet Julia herself might think so. He reflected also, that he was but the son of an obscure clergyman, whose living though good was his only possession ; from which alone was his father able to make any provision for him and his sister. This he knew that he strictly and conscientiously attended to, putting aside every year such a portion of his income as would not encroach upon their comforts or their charities. Their

habits were simple, their wishes few, their table though plain was elegant, and liberality governed by œconomy presided in every department of their domestic concerns.

To the church Edmund was destined : he had been promised patronage, and he hoped for preferment ; but on the uncertain issue of life or death he knew it was folly to build an expectation. All he had to do, was to wait with as much patience as he could the fulfilment of promises, and the realization of his hopes ; and if he ever dared to aspire to the hand of Julia, the reward would be even greater than the stake. In the mean time he could not deny himself the luxury of gazing upon her, of listening, of attending to her : but he determined to be silent ; not a word or look had yet betrayed the feelings of his heart, and he resolved that not a word or look should. But even a philosopher in love may deceive himself (if a philosopher ever were in love). But was it possible every day to see a lovely girl, to sit with her, to read to her, to sing

with her, to walk with her; to observe her respectful and tender attentions to his parents, her affectionate manner to his sister; to be enlivened by her cheerfulness, to listen to her pure and virtuous sentiments, to witness the tear she shed for suffering, to hear of her benevolence ;—was this possible, and not to love?—But whatever were the emotions of his heart, his tongue still preserved the honourable silence which his principles had imposed.

Julia esteemed him as the brother of her friend, respected him as the best of sons, and admired him as the first of men ; and though she wished she had such a brother, as a lover she never thought of him. She sung, talked, and laughed, with careless confidence ; and while every hour developed to his eyes some new charm of character, she was totally unconscious of her power and effect.

Whilst every sun rose a witness of the happiness of the inmates of the White Cottage, and sunk to shed repose upon their

pillows ; whilst Julia and Ellen thought nothing more on earth was wanting to their felicity, than what they possessed ; Mrs. Sinclair received a letter from her nephew, Captain Conway, informing her of his intention to ruralize a few weeks in the shades of Albany, to fall in love with some of the pretty rustics, and to laugh and romp with his cousin Julia. "Very obliging indeed !" said Julia. Edmund, who chanced to be present when the letter arrived, was thoughtful ; and Ellen was vexed at an addition to their little parties, and an interruption to their present pleasures and pursuits.

Conway was the only son of Colonel Conway, who married a younger sister of Mrs. Sinclair. Dying he bequeathed to him—often a soldier's only possession—(and it was only his) his sword. Mrs. Conway did not long survive him, and the orphan boy was principally supported at school by Mrs. Sinclair. From thence he went to a military academy ; and thus regularly trained to arms, he thought of battle as he would of a ball ;

of glory, as a soldier's certain meed. In Portugal, that field for promotion! he had rapidly risen to the command of a company; but receiving, as he led them on, a wound in his arm, he was compelled to ask for leave of absence. Impatient to see his aunt whom he idolized, and Julia whom he loved, as soon as he had had advice and assistance from an eminent surgeon in London he hastened down to Albany.

He had been absent from England about two years. "Yet toil had done the work of time," and though scarcely twenty he looked several years older. His were the charms of manly beauty, and his countenance possessed the fine and open expression of an ingenuous nature. Neither pain nor fatigue had subdued the buoyancy of his spirit: his gaiety was the effusion of genuine hilarity, and his good-humour the result of benevolent feelings.

His aunt and cousin welcomed him with unfeigned joy, and presented him with pride and pleasure to the Rector's family.

Edmund surveyed him with admiration ; and whether he feared a rival or not, his generous nature treated him as a friend.

With a disposition to assimilate with all whom he liked, with an adaptation of character that conformed to every one's habits without effort or affectation, Conway never failed to please ; and even Ellen, who feared an intruder, found him an auxiliary to their pleasures, rather than an interruption. His cheerfulness was a sunbeam that dispelled every cloud, and the whole party began to wonder how they had been so very happy without him.

Few people possess that discriminating tact, that synonym of *nice feeling*, which teaches them to avoid any act or allusion wounding or offensive to others. Conway did possess this rare and happy faculty ; and when any jarring chords sounded dissonantly in society, by a nice vibration in his own breast he instantly discovered the discord in another ; and by a gaiety of spirit, and a never-failing fund of pleasantry, he gene-

rally succeeded in restoring harmony. And though he sometimes descended into a pantomimic play of humour, into a species of buffoonery, which, however it may amuse, always derogates from the true character of the gentleman, and the dignity of the man; yet for the sake of the effects it produced, even Mrs. Sinclair would smile, though she afterwards reproved him. She knew he was capable of better things, and by a point of wit, or by starting some universal topic, might as effectually have “attuned the jarring spirits into peace,”—as by a quaintness of tone, an absurdity of gesture, or a distortion of feature.

“ I think, my dearest aunt,” said Ellen, “ you almost exalt cheerfulness and good humour into cardinal virtues, when I should place them among the minor qualities of the mind, contributing to rather than constituting the happiness of social intercourse.”
“ Ah! then, my Julia,” replied her aunt, “ you have never, as I have, witnessed the painful consequences that result from their

absence. You think probably that good sense, liberality, wit, politeness, and many other qualities which we meet with, are sufficient to render society agreeable. They may be so in a great degree; but observe, where cheerfulness and good humour shed their influence over these, there is a super-added charm which every heart acknowledges; and which is to the soul like the blessed light of heaven to the eye, illuminating every object and enlivening every feeling. The highest powers of the understanding, the most brilliant conversation, do not compensate in my opinion for the want of these qualities: yet these I think may atone for the want of some of them, inasmuch as they form so great a part of our own happiness, and promote that of others. If we would be as assiduous to cultivate these amiable dispositions of the bosom, as we are to acquire exterior accomplishments, we should not only be better but wiser, and sooner attain the object for which we labour; for no ornamental science, no tutored grace,

can bestow such an attraction to the person, as that which emanates from a cheerful disposition and a sweet temper."

"It is all true, my aunt," said Julia: "but shall we play a duet? I feel rather sentimental this evening," said she laughing, "and must charm away the sighing spirit with music. Come," striking her harp, "away with melancholy."

Edmund and Conway were of different characters; but they each appreciated the other, and soon entertained sentiments of mutual esteem. The high and graceful reserve of Edmund yielded to the gaiety of Conway, whilst that very gaiety was somewhat chastened by the dignified manner of his friend. Thus each serving as a check and an encourager, they derived a mutual advantage from association.

The introduction of so handsome a young man excited a tremulous delight in the bosoms of the young ladies of the village; and the black scarf which supported his disabled arm was an object too interesting to be

contemplated without a sigh; nay, some eyes even shed tears: but his gay countenance soon dispelled these drops of pity, and he was gazed at with the most lively admiration. Some called him exquisite; others beautiful; others handsome; others charming. Lavinia thought him divine; Sacharissa, a youthful Mars; Anna Maria, a Henry of Cranstoun, de Wilton, or Malcolm Græme; Deborah, an electrical machine; Henrietta, an Apollo. Laura and Lauretta thought nothing, only that they hoped to dance with him at the ball. Arabella Hopkins determined to sport all her finery every day to captivate him, and Catherine Foster wished she was as intimate at Mrs. Sinclair's as Ellen was.

It was now the end of July, and nothing was talked of in the village but the coming of age of George Frederic Augustus Thomas Wills, and the vast preparations that were making to celebrate this extraordinary event. Cards of invitation were sent to Mrs. Sinclair, Julia, and Conway, and to the Rectory; and

poor Arabella and Catherine were distracted to know how they were to be dressed. They came to consult with Julia on this important point; for her taste, they believed, must be good, as she had lived so long in London. Julia recommended simple white: but they would have colours—white looked so dowdy and common; and after a long discussion, like many persons who ask advice, they determined to follow their own, and “adorn themselves with much art.” “For myself,” said Ellen, “I shall certainly wear nothing but white: when we are not well acquainted with what is fashionable, the least conspicuous dress we can choose is to be preferred. I should feel miserable if I fancied myself fine, and I had always rather be the least than the most drest in a room.” “There is good sense in this,” said Mrs. Sinclair: “but you will not, my love, on this occasion, refuse to wear the same as Julia does; and my two girls shall be the lilies of our valley,” showing a beautiful trimming of the flower which Julia had painted. “Edmund

will not like *me* to wear this, I fear," said Ellen, timidly surveying the border. "Then I will not wear mine," said Julia. "He shall decide, my Ellen, and his choice shall be ours." Ellen thanked her for leaving it to his arbitration. The trimming was displayed, its modesty, simplicity, and beauty admired, and the compliment of its being *appropriate* to the wearers gratified them both. Thus sanctioned by the opinion of one whose taste and judgement were deemed by them infallible, their sister dresses were completed.

The day but one preceding the ball, Charles Wills, who was just returned home from a visit, came running to the Rectory to inform Ellen that Bertha was ill, and entreated her to go and see her, as his mother and sisters were all out. In her way she called upon Julia; and they proceeded together to the mansion, where all was bustle and preparation for the approaching festivities. On inquiring for Miss Bertha's room, a maid servant, who was dusting the bannisters of the splendid staircase, directed

them to the end of a long gallery, from which a door led to a narrow flight of stairs which communicated with the old part of the mansion : these they were told to ascend, and they would find her apartment. The stairs were so dark, steep, and narrow, that it was with some difficulty the two friends reached the top : they proceeded along a passage, without finding the room in which they imagined Bertha was. In one they saw packing-cases and trunks, and in another dirt and lumber of various descriptions.

"We must certainly be mistaken," said Julia as she gently opened the last door which she perceived in the passage. "No, you are not," replied a faint voice, which she knew to be Bertha's. "Is it you, Julia? you, Ellen? This is very good; I was quite alone. Who told you I was ill?" "Charles." "Ah, he is but just returned home! Had he been here before, I should not have been so ill." And the poor girl buried her face in the bedclothes, and sobbed piteously. "We are come to comfort you,

.not to make you cry," said Ellen, scarcely able to control her own tears as she looked on the low mattress and the shabby furniture of the bed. "Have you been long ill?" "Some days." "And who sits with you?" "No one." "No one!" they exclaimed. "No: my mamma's maid is too busy, and so is my sister's maid, making dresses for the ball; and the housekeeper says she has not time to send me any thing: the only person who brings me a little tea and dry toast is Jenny, the under servant of all; but she has not time to stay with me; and Carlo went away with Charles."

Julia and Ellen could no longer restrain their tears; and as poor Bertha perceived them, she faintly smiled, and said, "Now I must comfort you; you must not cry for me: I am better than I was, and I hope soon to come and see you." "Is this your room?" "Yes: when I asked my mamma to let me have a room to myself, because I did not like sleeping any longer with two of the maids, she said she could not spare

me any other." "But the rooms we looked into in this passage are larger and better than this." "But they are wanted for the carriage-trunks and boxes and other things:—I like this very well when I am not ill—but now it is so far from every body!"

The bed on which this poor neglected girl lay was in a corner of a dark garret, on a wooden bedstead, with ragged and dirty curtains; but even this, uncomfortable as it was, she said she greatly preferred to being the associate of the servants. Ellen thought she appeared faint and exhausted, and left her to go to ask for something nutritious. As she crossed the gallery, she again saw the servant who had directed her to Bertha's room.

"Did you know Miss Bertha was so ill?" said Ellen. "Yes, miss, we knew she was not very well; but we have all been so busy we had no time for nursing; and my lady said she could not have a doctor coming backwards and forwards to the house at this time: so we did not think much about her."

"She is very ill," said Ellen ; "and if you were as ill, Jenny, you would be glad of a little attention. I wish you would ask the housekeeper for a basin of broth, or a little gruel, for she is quite faint for want of nourishment." "You had better ask her yourself, miss; for she is so cross to be spoken to now, that I durst not go for the life of me."

Lady Wills and her daughters were all gone to the market town to make purchases of finery for the ball ; for the sisters boasted of their different tastes, which variety they thought indicated fancy and judgement : consequently they never intrusted the important choice of a cap, feather, flower, or ribband, to one another, but each selected for herself. Ellen therefore had no other person to apply to but the housekeeper, and she proceeded to her room. On rapping at the door, it was opened by Mrs. Stubbs herself, who seemed ready charged with a sharp scolding for the intruder ; but seeing Ellen, she checked herself, and half curtsied.

"Will you be so kind, Mrs. Stubbs, as to give me a small basin of broth for Miss Bertha, who is very ill in bed?" "I have no broth, miss," said she, endeavouring to speak civilly, while her face became every moment of a brighter flame colour; "I have only soups, which I don't suppose you think proper for her." "Will you weaken some with a little water?" said Ellen. "I have no time to make such messes," replied Mrs. Stubbs in kindling wrath; "and I can't spare any soup for her. I can't think how the child came to be so ill now. I am sure I know nothing about her, and it is very inconvenient to trouble me now with sickness."

Ellen had no wish to reason or remonstrate at such an *inconvenient* season: she came to request, she was obliged to demand, and was resolved at all events not to go away without something for the poor girl. "I will thank you for a jelly, then, since you have no broth;" and was advancing towards a table on which were placed some dozens in

glasses, and many well filled dishes. “ Oh, I cannot spare one jelly ! ” screamed Mrs. Stubbs. “ Excuse me,” said Ellen calmly : “ if you have no broth, I must have a jelly. The illness of a fellow-creature is both my reason and apology.” And whilst Mrs. Stubbs stood swelling with rage and astonishment to be so defied in the territory where she was accustomed to hold undisputed sway, Ellen deliberately walked off with her prize. As she crossed the hall she met a man servant with a tray most abundantly filled with cold fowl, ham, cakes, dry toast, and chocolate ; and stopping, she said, “ John, will you give me a small piece of that toast for Miss Bertha, who is ill ? ” “ Yes, miss, take it all if you please. I can easily make a bit more.” “ Thank you, John,” said Ellen with her sweetest smile and voice. “ How different are tempers ! ” thought she, and ran up stairs to the poor sick girl, who eagerly took the jelly, and attempted to eat the bread ; but she had been too long without food to swallow even that light morsel.

Ellen, timid as was her nature, and retiring as were her general habits, was dauntless as a heroine when her feelings were aroused in the cause of humanity and justice, and she resolved to represent the situation of poor Bertha to Lady Wills herself as soon as she returned home. Her ladyship was not unacquainted with her illness; but having ordered her to be put to bed, that she might not stand shivering and shaking about like a ghost, and having sent her own maid a few times to see her, who always reported that she found her dozing, Lady Wills considered it a good sign of amendment, and "dared to say she would sleep it off;" with which comfortable belief, she gave herself no further trouble about her.

After sitting with Bertha for two hours, they left her, cheered by their kindness and the little sustenance she had taken; and finding Jenny, they begged of her to attend to her young mistress; which the girl promised to do.

Lady Wills was not yet returned, and

Ellen therefore hastened home to communicate the state of poor Bertha to her mother. Mrs. Herbert, whose feelings of humanity, and particularly for children, were quickly awakened, determined to call on Lady Wills, and invite the invalid to her house, till the important ball was over, believing that she would gladly consent to part with her. Nor was she mistaken, though many were the words of concern for the trouble a sick child would be to her; and how her own feelings had been torn to pieces by not being able to attend to her herself! but the house was in such a bustle she could not. Sir Thomas, every body knew, would have his own way in that and every thing else;—with a great deal about the unluckiness of the child's illness at such a time, her own maternal solicitude, Mrs. Herbert's kindness, with a few other digressions about Sir Thomas, and her son coming of age, and the necessity there was for a ball, &c. till she thought she had sufficiently impressed Mrs. Herbert with a high opinion of her

anxiety for Bertha, and her own and her son's importance. She then rang the bell, and desired a servant would go to her poor dear child, and tell her she must get up, as Mrs. Herbert was come to take her home with her.

"We shall see you at the ball, I hope?" said Lady Wills: "it will be very grand, I assure you: there will be My lord Arling-ton and the countess, his son Lord New-berry, and his three beautiful daughters." "I have heard they are very plain, and the eldest extremely deformed," said Mrs. Her-
bert in her matter of fact way. "O poor thing! I believe she is; but the second is very pretty." "Does she not squint?" "A little, perhaps; but I think it looks only roguish in her. The third is a prodi-gious fine girl." "I am told she is lame." "Rather lame, but she passes it off very well indeed, quite with a grace; and I as-sure you I have seen many people imitate her, just as Alexander's courtiers did his wry neck." "Just so," said Mrs. Herbert

half smiling. But as she had no pleasure in enumerating the defects of any person, and had merely mentioned those of the ladies in question in order to check the falsehoods which Lady Wills was uttering, she no longer interrupted her loquacity, but heard a list of the great and the humble who were to grace and fill the ball-room. "Now you will come, will you not?" said the lady with surprising condescension. "My health will not permit of my sitting up late, and therefore I never venture on joining any evening parties: your ladyship must excuse me." "But Miss Ellen will come, and Mr. Herbert has promised to dine here. We shall have two oxen roasted whole, twenty sheep, ten hogs, and thirty barrels of ale." "I dare say there will be a very good dinner," replied Mrs. Herbert, not attending to the words Lady Wills was uttering, but supposing their import was dinner,—"I am sure there will be enough." "Enough!" exclaimed the lady,—"why, Mrs. Herbert, Mrs. Herbert, you surely do not imagine I

intend Mr. Herbert to dine with the mob ; with all the vulgar people who are to eat of these things ! ”

Mrs. Herbert, roused from her reverie on poor Bertha, who she was anxiously wishing would make her appearance, by the shrill voice of Lady Wills, which was raised to its highest pitch of anger and surprise at being unattended to, replied, “ I beg pardon, ma’am ; what did I say ? ” “ Why, that there would be enough for dinner of the oxen, and such things,—as if they were for my company.” “ I really beg pardon,” said Mrs. Herbert again,—“ I was thinking of Bertha, and that we shall be late. Do you think she can walk so far as our house ? ” “ O yes, I dare say she can.” “ If not,” replied Mrs. Herbert, “ I must beg the favour of a carriage.” At that instant the poor child crept into the room, leaning on the arm of the maid-servant.—“ How are you, child ? ” said Lady Wills. Then suddenly recollecting she was a fond mother, and perceiving the eyes of the child turned towards

Mrs. Herbert, "Come hither, my darling, and let me look at you ; come walk, can't you?" The child quitted the maid's arm, and fell on the floor. Mrs. Herbert caught her up, and some drops and water revived her. As it was seen she could not walk, the carriage was obliged to be ordered ; and whilst it was getting ready, Mrs. Herbert recommended a little wine and water and a biscuit for her ; which was given. Lady Wills was scarcely restrained by the presence of Mrs. Herbert from chiding the child for giving herself such airs. When the carriage was ready the little trembling girl was lifted into it, and, sobbing, instantly sunk into the arms of Mrs. Herbert.—"How good, how kind!" was all she could articulate.

The incumbrance of a sick child removed, preparations for the ball went on without interruption. The poor girl, who had witnessed them as merely for the pleasure of others, quitted the spot without regret. She knew that, though she might have been a spectator at the ball, she should not have

been permitted any participation of its amusement, even had her health allowed her. But ill and weak as she was, the kind attentions of Mrs. Herbert and Ellen satisfied every feeling of her heart; and she heard Charles's animated description of the approaching festivities, and his sincere and affectionate regrets at her absence from them, without a wish to be present.

At length the day, the important day arrived, big with the fate of George Frederick Augustus Thomas Wills! The morning was ushered in by the ringing of all the bells in the steeple, and the firing of cannon, not *eighteen pounders*, but *eighteen ouncers*, whose brazen throats, after having above forty times this day brayed out the years of our gracious Regent, was now prepared to proclaim also those which the hero of the day had numbered in this nether world.

Sir Thomas considered these cannon as some of his proudest distinctions: no one in the country within many miles of the

mansion had such ornaments to his grounds, or could give such loud-sounding proofs of loyalty. On the birth-days of their majesties, and all the royal family, when Sir Thomas chanced to be at the mansion, they popped out the whole story of their different ages, like a parish register, too often telling “a tale of the times of old:” they were indeed arrant gossips. On coronation days they told the number of years their majesties had reigned; and on any glorious event, either by sea or land, they were equally vociferous. Thus placed “even in the cannon’s mouth” was every circumstance of importance foreign and domestic.

To give éclat to the hours of their public report, the heir arrived in the midst of it. As soon as the half maddened mob perceived his carriage, they supplied the place of his horses, and, at the peril of terminating his earthly career at once, dragged him up the hill to the mansion, just as Sir Thomas was putting the last match to the touch-hole, to announce the attainment of his son’s twenty-first

year. But seeing him, he insisted upon his alighting, and firing off the last cannon for himself,—a command with which the dutiful youth complied. At length the firing ceased, and the bells took up the note of joyance.

Oh, how busy was the village of Albany on this eventful day! Those who were not invited to the dinner and ball went to survey the preparations, and regale their eyes and noses with the fragrant incense of the sacrifices of oxen, sheep, and hogs, offered on the altar of *baronetcical* pride. Rivers of ale and fountains of punch *flowed* in plentiful libations to the noisy peasantry. To the dinner succeeded the sports: not such as those with which the gallant Leicester entertained the royal Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle,—such as tilts and tournaments, masqueradings on land and on water,—but with the more refined pleasures of the nineteenth century; running in sacks; grinning through horse collars; eating hot dump-lings; catching hold of pigs with their tails soaped: these were amongst the amuse-

ments of this festive day : and even females, laying aside the blush of modesty, entered the lists as competitors for a prize, and ran like Atalantas—(but not for the golden apple)—in order to divert the hero of the day and his numerous guests.

Five was the hour appointed for dinner. Sir Thomas, who was the very minute hand of punctuality, had made it an established rule never to wait for any guest, however great might be his rank, or however long the distance he had to come. Every one's watch ought to go as his did, and every body ought to be half an hour at least before the time, rather than half a minute after : “Punctuality is the soul of business,” was a phrase he had continually at the tip of his tongue; and how many hours of his life had he lost by waiting and watching for the very moment which was to set him down at some place, to keep some appointment, to commence some unimportant operation, or to perform some meditated act ! But others not being possessed with the

same spirit, and who would rather yield to circumstances than vainly attempt to govern them, were perpetually, though unintentionally, inflicting upon him vexation and disappointment. On this day, in consideration of the many miles some of the visitors had to travel, and the delays that might occur on the road, in order to *preserve the peace*, Lady Wills had previously requested him to name five o'clock for dinner, but in reality to delay it for half an hour; which being promised *to a minute*, the petition was granted. At five, the worthy baronet began to fidget; not half the company had assembled! His splendid gold watch was taken out and returned again to his pocket every second: at a quarter after five he began to fret; many of the guests were still wanting, and My lords Arlington and Newberry were amongst the absentees. At half past five he became furious, he would have the dinner:—"But My lord Arlington is not come, nor Lord Newberry," exclaimed My lady. "Arlington or Darlington, New-

berry or Oldberry," replied Sir Thomas—
"I will wait for no one a minute longer! They know my hour, they know my ways, and they ought to be here:—I do not like town fashions in the country." Then advancing to the bell, he seemed by his determined air to be going to pull it violently. Poor Lady Wills, whose spirits had been agitated by the impatience of Sir Thomas, gave a short shrill scream; and seizing hold of his arm with a kind of galvanic motion, "Sir Thomas, what would you do! We cannot sit down without Lord Arlington." At that moment one of the company said, that he and his retinue were approaching. "Then we may order the cook to dish up," cried the baronet, again attempting to catch hold of the bell rope. "I tell you, Sir Thomas," screamed the lady more violently than ever, "you shall not ring till My lord is in the house. Would you insult a nobleman?"—"Shall not!" muttered Sir Thomas, a little dismayed by his lady's heroic look. But taking courage by the

sight of so many friends surrounding him, half in jest and half in anger, “Would you, madam, insult a baronet? I tell you I will always have my own way in my own house.” And the master of the mansion was again approaching the bell, when Mr. George Frederic Augustus Thomas Wills, seeing an hysterick gathering in the hemisphere of his poor mother, ventured to interpose, and, as hero of the day, claim the boon of ten minutes delay; for the equipage supposed to be Lord Arlington’s proved to be that of another person. “Well, George, to please you, I will wait ten minutes; but not one more, not a second, not an instant longer.” This brief respite partly recovered the lady; and by means of her fan and smelling-bottle she again breathed freely. Lord Arlington fortunately arrived before the ten minutes expired, but no Lord Newberry.

As it was known that entreaties for a further delay would be unavailing, none were made: dinner was ordered, and the company proceeded to the dining-room. Sir

Thomas would not even allow the destined seat next to Lady Wills to be kept vacant for his lordship. "First come first served," he said; and though the right was graced by Lord Arlington, she was compelled to have on her left hand Mr. Herbert.

As the second course was serving up, and, according to the rules of the *haut ton*, about an hour after the time appointed for dinner, arrived Lord Newberry. "Glad to see you, My lord, but wait for nobody; sit down where you can." And My lord, with many apologies, squeezed himself in between two young ladies, who kindly made room for him. The dinner passed, like a thousand other dinners of the same kind, in elaborate discussions upon the different dishes, the flavour of the wines, and such variety of topics as the objects immediately present to their senses afforded.

And now came the ball, the long anticipated ball. Carriages with their fair cargoes, well-dressed beaus, and anxious chaperons, rattled in the court-yard. The hearts

of the young beat high with hope ; every eye sparkled with delight, every foot was in practice, every tongue in motion.

The floor of the ball-room was chalked in various colours and devices, with the initials of Mr. George Frederic Augustus Thomas Wills in the centre, and the years he had completed. The same characters and the same intelligence were registered also by coloured lamps at one end of the room ; intertwined with wreaths of laurel, though Fame had never recorded his deeds of glory, or assigned to him the meed of victory—but there were numbers to admire and extol the taste and elegance of the decorations.

Mrs. Sinclair, Julia and Ellen had mixed in the general examination, and had withdrawn to a seat, where they were soon joined by Edmund and Conway, who beheld our lilies of the valley with affectionate admiration. Julia was flattered and gratified by Edmund's approval of his sister's dress; for it was her taste that directed, her hands that executed it ; and the praises he bestowed

belonged to her. Of Ellen and her simple attire he *spoke*; on Julia he only gazed; but his “eloquent eye” conveyed more than volumes of words—and she, who was the object of such attention, must have been more or less than woman, not to have understood in some degree its meaning:—but the emotions of joy which such conjecture gave, were in a moment calmed by the reflection that she but shared his admiration with Ellen. “He regards me as his sister,” she thought, “and I am happy in such a distinction from such a man.” Thus she reasoned, though in a ball-room; and she persuaded herself she was satisfied with a sister’s regard.

But now the musicians took their places, and all was flutter and expectation. Lord Newberry opened the ball with Miss Wills, the eldest hope and long celebrated beauty of the house of Wills. On that night, Time seemed to have rubbed off all his old scores, and gave her to the admiring spectators in the beauty of nineteen. Lady Wills looked,

hoped, and exulted in her air-built castles—in which Lavinia had no participation. She went through the movements of the dance like an automaton, and, when her partner spoke, replied only by a look of languor, or a simper.

When the two first dances ended, and the gentlemen were to make their own elections unbiassed by form or etiquette, the next were anxiously expected both by mothers and daughters. With what astonishment and pique did they then behold My lord Newberry lead out the blushing Ellen, and Mr. George Wills, Julia Douglas!

The heart of Lady Wills swelled with rage and mortification; for though Julia might ultimately possess a large fortune, of her parentage there were some doubts—and to have the son and heir of the house of Wills select a girl of such dangerous attractions alarmed her pride, and agitated her spirits. Taking the first opportunity of speaking to him aside, she said, “For Heaven’s sake, George, what could you mean by dancing

with Miss Douglas?" "I meant to select the loveliest girl in the room, and the best dancer." "But a girl whom nobody knows!" "So much the better, she is the more to my taste; I do not like girls whom every body talks of." "Oh, as for that....." "Come, come, my dear lady mother," said George good-humouredly, "no more of this—no lecturing to-night—am I not of age?" said he slyly and laughing. "O George!" exclaimed the lady in an agony of apprehension, "you surely do not mean....." "I mean nothing unless you provoke me to it. But this is being too serious. Do you forget, my dear mother, the time when you yourself was a beauty, and wonder that another should excite admiration? Come, do not look so grave: my heart is safe, and will serve many a campaign to beauty yet, before it surrenders itself prisoner."

His mother recovered herself, but suddenly said,—"Then there is Ellen Herbert! I am quite astonished that Lord Newberry should think of dancing with her, only a

clergyman's daughter!" "And why not, mother? Is there a prettier girl in the room?" "Yes, I think many; your sisters, for instance. But, George, you are getting quite romantic. I don't approve of this conversation." "Nor I, madam," replied he, and was walking away. "Stop," cried she, "stop, my *dear* George, I must beg you will oblige me, and dance with Miss Sylvester, the rich heiress of Birmingham."

Unwilling to interrupt the pleasure of the evening, he suffered himself to be led to the lady in question—who was short, fat, and of a swarthy complexion. Her neck, ears, and arms were hung round and absolutely set with a profusion of ornaments, the undoubted manufactory of her native place. Thus glittering in all the brass of Birmingham, he led his partner to the dance. But here the poor girl, who had never received any education either useful or ornamental, was totally at a loss how to conduct herself in this great assemblage. She wished to appear easy, and became forward; she saw

some laughing, and she laughed also. In dancing she was ignorant of time, figure, and step: sometimes she ran, sometimes jumped, sometimes stood still; would turn round whenshe ought to have gone straight forward, and advance when she ought to retire. By the assistance and manual exertions of her partner she at length reached the bottom in safety. But desirous of being spared another exhibition of the same kind, he endeavoured to persuade her she must be very much fatigued, had therefore better relinquish the next dance, and he would have the superior gratification of conversing with her. This proposal, with its implied compliment, succeeded, and they seated themselves as if for conversation: but here she was as little successful as in dancing, and all her remarks and answers were ill timed and ill expressed.

Lady Wills had for some time secretly destined her for her eldest son, thinking that her fortune would give splendour to the baronetcy, and might even purchase a peerage.

In the course of the evening, Lord New-

berry regained the favour of Lady Wills, by selecting as his future partners the *whole series of her daughters*. The handsome Conway alternately excited envy and admiration in the breasts of both men and women ; while Edmund, who did not experience much amusement from the light fantastic toe, after dancing with Julia, and one of the Miss Willses, became merely a spectator :— “ How much of *character*, ” thought he, “ is displayed in the movements of the body, in the air and attitudes of a dancer ! ” In Lavinia’s affected languor, and still more affected languishments, he saw the simpleton from head to foot ; in Ellen, the modest retiring nature, diffident of its own powers, anxious to escape from observation, and distressed when she met it ; but at times forgetful of herself in the hilarity of the exercise, when the cheering eye of Julia gave her encouragement. Julia, he thought, united that easy confidence which education gives, with the delicacy of a fine and ingenuous mind. Her steps were perfect, her ear was correct ;

she exhibited no extraordinary gestures, attempted no uncommon graces, but in every air and attitude was modest and unaffected. She dances, thought Edmund, like a woman of good sense and refinement.

Nothing very remarkable occurred during the evening, except (but such an event can scarcely be termed remarkable) that Anna Maria fainted in the most interesting and affecting manner, just as Conway leading Ellen Herbert was passing her. Her pathetic oh ! caught his ear, and his arm caught her trembling form as it was sinking to the ground. In vain were salts and vinegar applied to her nostrils, she neither spoke nor opened her bright eyes ; and she might very long have remained in this distressing situation, with her fair head reclining on the shoulder of Conway, had not her father strongly urged her being removed to her chamber ; and adding his assistance to his advice, the beauteous sufferer revived in time to oppose such cruel counsel ; and on Conway's lamenting her illness as depriving him of the happiness of her

hand in the ensuing dances, she miraculously recovered all her energy, and with angelic sweetness assured him it was at his service.

Mrs. Hopkins, who had been for some time during the evening in close conference with her, now seated herself by Mrs. Sinclair, and remarked what a lovely couple Captain Conway and Anna Maria would make, indeed did make! She had never seen two people who looked so well together; they were both so handsome, so amiable, danced so well, and were so very much alike! "I can see no resemblance," said Mrs. Sinclair: "Captain Conway is dark, Miss Wills fair—he is very tall, she is very short—his hair is extremely dark, hers....." "a beautiful auburn," interrupted Mrs. Hopkins, "not red, as you were going to say." Mrs. Sinclair smiled at the quick anticipation of what she was going to say, and the defence of her friend's hair. Mrs. Hopkins resumed the subject. "I cannot help looking at them; but perhaps Captain Conway is engaged? It

is scarcely possible so very handsome a man should not have made many conquests.” “But his conquests do not imply an engagement, rather the contrary.” “Oh, then he is free?” “I did not say he was,” answered Mrs. Sinclair. “But I am sure you know, you must know, you must be in his confidence!” “Then, madam,” said Mrs. Sinclair gravely, and perceiving her aim, “I can make no communications on the subject.” Mrs. Hopkins, disappointed in the effect of her premeditated scrutiny into the state of Captain Conway’s affections, fanned herself with great vivacity; and Mrs. Sinclair, rising, left her to her conjectures and confusion.

At length dancers and spectators, fiddlers and fiddles, became drowsy; the evening closed after the morning had dawned; the company departed for their respective habitations, and the village once more sunk into repose.

While all was gaiety at her father’s house, Bertha passed the evening with Mrs. Herbert

cheerfully and contentedly. They read, worked, and chatted ; and though she was much better, she expressed neither regret at being absent from the ball, nor anxiety about it. She once only simply wished she could see Charles and Ellen dance, and hoped they were happy.

Lord Newberry, who had remained all night at the mansion, lounged the next morning with Mr. George Wills to the Cottage and the Rectory. They had both admired Julia at the ball, and were still more captivated to find her morning face as lovely as her evening one. Lord Newberry in particular gave such unequivocal testimonies of admiration, that Julia was both offended and distressed ; for even praise unsanctioned by intimacy is freedom, and flattery impertinence. Yet Lord Newberry was in general terms a well-bred man and a man of fashion ; but he sometimes presumed a little upon his rank, to those whom he considered as his inferiors. Lady Wills had suggested the probabi-

lity of Julia being the daughter of General Sinclair; and as he was never married, her ignoble birth, though it could not diminish the lustre of her charms, diminished the value of the possessor; and he gazed at her and addressed her with a familiarity that offended her, and called forth all the pride of her character. He had penetration enough to perceive that, whatever was the disgrace attached to her birth, her mind was high and elevated; and insensibly his manner and conversation assumed a tone of respect, excited by the graceful dignity of hers. At his first request she had played and sung: he threw himself into ecstasies, exclaiming, “If music be the food of love, play on.” This familiarity, which he thought gallantry, though veiled under a quotation, changed the ease of her manner into reserve. He bestowed the highest praise upon her paintings, and the tasteful decorations of the apartment; and gazed with such open admiration upon her person, as proved he feared neither to avow his sentiments nor doubted their re-

ception. Many a woman would have been gratified by such flattery and such distinction: but the innate delicacy of Julia's mind, and the proud principles of female dignity which she had partly derived from her aunt and partly from nature, made her shrink from the least familiarity, and her brow assume its awe-compelling frown.

Edmund and Ellen, who had been present during the greatest part of his lordship's visit, and had observed all the changes of Julia's countenance and manner, left her in the climax of her dignity. As Ellen took her hand her eye softened, and a tear swam in its orb. "Do not go," she whispered, "do not both leave me." "We must," replied Ellen; "my mother is waiting for us." Edmund bowed with respectful tenderness, and the contrast between her visitors she not only saw but felt.

As Edmund and Ellen returned homewards, the serious pensiveness of his countenance, and a deep sigh which burst from his bosom, alarmed his sister. "My bro-

ther!" she exclaimed,—“my dear brother!” she more softly murmured. He spoke not. Then, as if penetrating into the secret recesses of his heart, “Julia cannot love Lord Newberry.” “Who, my little conjurer,” said Edmund affecting to smile, “taught you the art of divination and of prophecy?” “Affection and sympathy,” replied Ellen: “surely a sister ought to read a brother’s heart.” “Ellen,” he answered in a deep and serious tone, “you have read mine: this is a subject on which I am no philosopher; but though I cannot forbear to feel, I may forbear to speak; and I require the same reserve from you. I know I must not presume to think of, to name Julia but as my sister’s friend, and I hope as mine too; but as my friend only. Fortune has placed between us a barrier which I cannot attempt to overcome: she must not descend to my situation, and I cannot aspire to hers. But were she poor and I rich, I might then encourage a hope. O Ellen, what a treasure would she be! what a companion! This is the first

time my lips have given utterance to these feelings : the confidence is sacred ; and now farewell for ever to the subject ! I shall soon return to college."

Ellen pressed the arm she held, and wept in silence. She knew that to any deep emotion words could minister little consolation, and she had none indeed to offer. She reasoned as Edmund did ; but she had some gleams of hope which he had not, because she knew Julia better than he did. Though she indulged in many whimsicalities of fancy, as affording amusement to her mind, and variety to her employments, yet she never attempted to act upon them in the serious duties of life. She formed no chimerical plans of conduct, raised no ideal fabrics, formed no Utopia ; she separated, with the skilful hand of judgement and reason, the solid from the superficial, the real from the imaginary ; and much as she would have rejoiced at the union of her brother and friend, the same insurmountable impediments that presented themselves to him, appeared also

to her. Julia they believed to be an heiress, destined probably to move in the circles of rank and fashion : he, the son of an obscure clergyman, with no other expectations than moderate preferment ; and whatever were the virtues that dignified, the talents that distinguished, or the graces that adorned him, she well knew that in all worldly and lasting connections these are not alone sufficient to constitute happiness ; nor would they authorize her brother to address Julia, as a woman either sinks or rises to the situation of the man she marries.

Ellen in her heart thought it impossible for any one who had seen Edmund as intimately as Julia had, not to love him ; instances of her approbation and marks of her preference shethought she had observed ; she had seen the glow of pleasure mantle on her cheek at her brother's approach, her eyes sparkle with admiration, or melt with tenderness, ashe spoke or sung : but so, she thought, would her own, and these were no more than a sister's feelings,—nor even so much,

for when Edmund had left the room Julia would resume her music, her drawing, or her work ; would sing or talk as cheerfully as when he was present ; whilst Ellen remembered how her thoughts dwelt upon all he had said, and to indulge them she would gladly have abstracted herself from every thing. But Julia continued the same. She did not therefore love him, and she was determined sacredly and inviolably to preserve the secret of his attachment. She would not, she thought, condescend to win even Julia for her brother, by persuading her to love him. The heart that was worthy of his must be spontaneously given ; and thus, as pride and tenderness reasoned, she found that reserve would be no effort, and a deposit so sacred as that which had been intrusted to her could not be yielded up.

Julia would gladly have left the room at the same time that Edmund and Ellen did ; but, compelled to remain, she listened to all that Lord Newberry chose to utter to her, with an unrelenting air of reserve,

which checked and disconcerted him; and as Mrs. Sinclair was weary of her visitors, she did not attempt to support any conversation, and they soon took their leave.

"Prudery, all prudery!" said George Wills as they left the house. Lord Newberry affected to laugh, but the prudery had wounded him. Accustomed like Cæsar to come, to see, and to conquer, he had no idea that any girl could be so insensible as Julia was to the honour his attentions conferred; and to be baffled even in the most trifling point of gallantry, mortified his vanity. He saw no one, whom, if she could see, she could prefer to him. Conway was like a dear familiar brother; Edmund a college soph; and George Wills a merely good-natured fellow. But as there was some difficulty in gaining a reluctant heart, so he thought there would be more glory; and he was determined to attempt and attain the conquest, however he might dispose of the spoils.

Julia in the mean time, rendered uneasy

by his freedom and impertinence, and at the sudden and ill-timed departure of Edmund and his sister, could not resume her cheerfulness after they were gone ; and finding the sportive good-humour of Conway, and the conversation of her aunt, ineffectual to restore her spirits, she walked into the shrubbery, and, throwing herself into a seat, burst into tears. The salutary shower relieved her oppressed bosom, and she was returning towards the house when she met Ellen, who, holding out her hands, said, “ My mother could not walk out this morning, my father is in his library, my brother gone out riding ; and I flew to pass another hour with you, Julia, for we so suddenly left you.”—but perceiving the swollen eyes of her friend, and her still dejected countenance, she stopped—Julia pressed her hand, and attempted to smile.

“ I have been wearied with that coxcomb,” she said, “ and, I believe, out of humour. This kindness, my Ellen, will sooth and restore me.” But her spirits had been

subdued, and the tears again flowed down her cheeks. "I am angry with myself for being so annoyed by impertinence and folly: but we will talk on other subjects, and forget this." Julia made an effort to beguile the thing she was, by seeming otherwise; and the effort partly succeeded. Her bosom became more tranquil; and though she sometimes sighed, she conversed with her accustomed ease.

Though Ellen's simple heart had never experienced a warmer feeling of affection than for her parents and brother; though she was unacquainted with love as a passion; yet she was not such a novice in its theory as to believe that all Julia's uneasiness proceeded from Lord Newberry's attentions. The object of *her* highest admiration was her brother; and with a sister's fond partiality, she thought that every one must behold him with sentiments similar, if not so exalted as hers. She had observed that Julia had turned to him from Lord Newberry during their visit, and now she saw

her agitation she caught fresh rays of hope. But she meant not to communicate them to Edmund, lest they should prove illusive.

The intercourse between the two families continued as usual, and a part of every day was generally passed together. Edmund only was not so constantly with them to participate in their domestic amusements of reading and music, or to attend them in their walks. Julia was often thoughtful and abstracted, and Ellen prudent but observing.

Mrs. Sinclair and her niece were beginning to be annoyed by the frequent visits of Miss Anna Maria Wills, who under the most frivolous pretences would call at the Cottage, sometimes alone, and sometimes with her friend Mrs. Hopkins. The gallant Conway often attended the ladies home ; for though he could not allay the sun's intemperate heat, quell the fury of the winds, turn aside the clouds in their descent, or stem the tempest, yet all these penalties of the season were not only cheerfully endured, but sought, if he were present.

Amongst the numerous terrors of the young lady, that of a thunder storm was one of the most troublesome. One evening when the sky wore, as she thought, rather an ominous appearance, she rushed into the Cottage with Mrs. Hopkins, and petitioned for a little shelter with all the energy and eloquence of alarm. No one had observed any terrific aspect of the clouds, and immediately inquired what was approaching. "A most dreadful thunder-storm," said Mrs. Hopkins, "and Miss Anna Maria is terrified like a child in a tempest; so I persuaded her to run in here, for I dare not proceed another step lest she should faint with fright." "I cannot see even a cloud," said Julia looking out of the window: "Frederic, you are weather-wise, come and give your opinion." "Oh! indeed," said Mrs. Hopkins, "there is a terrible black cloud." "Where, ma'am?" — "I see it," replied Conway, humouring her assertion,— "it is very like a whale, and will presently spout hurricanes."

Anna Maria, who had seen no terrible

cloud, and was displeased with Mrs. Hopkins for asserting a falsehood which any eyes might detect, summoned up sufficient spirit to say, "I did not say there was a terrible cloud, Mrs. H. ; but you know I always can tell when a storm *is* coming, and I am sure we shall have one this evening."— "At what hour ?" said Julia. "O Miss Douglas, you are not afraid, you have no nerves."—"None for imaginary terrors," thought Julia.

The young lady waited two hours for the coming of the storm, prepared with smelling-bottle, little shrieks, starts, and, if she found a favourable opportunity, a fainting fit ; but after she had partaken of tea, the sun most perversely set in cloudless splendour, and all pretence for a longer visit was at an end. But this, though more brief and less effective than Anna Maria had hoped it would be, partly answered its purpose, as Conway escorted them home, and had the happiness of guarding her safely through the dangers of a flock of sheep, of saving her from

the fury of a frog, and from being devoured by a goose, whose open mouth and terrific hiss in its *mother tongue* occasioned such an extraordinary tremor in her susceptible frame, that any one less good-humoured than Conway might have questioned to which of the animals the epithet of goose best applied.

"I wonder," said Conway in the simplicity of his heart, "you ever attempt to walk in the country, since there are so many objects in it that excite your apprehension, and which you are exposed to meet at every step."—"I wonder so too," said Mrs. Hopkins, "and often tell her she has too much sensibility. I wished her not to go out this evening; but I could not prevail. Perhaps you may have more power, Mr. Conway."

Anna Maria looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh; and on looking up she met his eyes, and again cast hers down. But Conway did not withdraw his. He could not believe that there was any artifice in a blush and a sigh; neither did he entirely flatter himself that he was

the exciting object of either. But he was curious to trace their source, if possible; and he continued to observe every thing her features expressed, and her words conveyed: but of words she was not so profuse as her companion; who, eloquently and fluently, lamented her extreme sensibility, and the misery to which it would expose her through life,—she felt every thing with such acuteness, was so timid, so gentle, so amiable! And she looked at Conway as if she expected him to assent to her praises; but he listened in silence, as did Anna Maria. He was taking his leave at the gate of the plantation, when Mrs. Hopkins entreated him to see them safe to the house, for there might be people lurking about. Conway thought it strange that they should not be secure in their home premises; but he could not refuse the request of female fear, and he saw them in perfect safety to the steps of the mansion. “Such women,” he thought, “ought to have a band of soldiers to attend them, if they are so apprehensive of danger at every step.” He

thought Anna Maria's timidity absolute folly : but he remembered the sigh, the blush, the soft glance of her eye directed towards him ; and he changed folly into weakness, and at last weakness into delicacy, and with his usual indulgence compassionated her terrors, and thought himself rather favoured by the clinging tenderness and confidence with which she sought his protection.

Mrs. Sinclair and Julia, having no such fears, were not very indulgent to those who had. They would watch the approach of a tempest, mark its sublime and grand effect in the sky, listen to the awful rolling of the thunder, in adoration of the Deity, and in confidence in his protecting power. They knew that some persons were constitutionally agitated and affected by its atmospheric influence; and though bodily sensations could not be altogether removed, their fears, they thought, by the exertion of their reason, might be in some measure checked and subdued.

Anna Maria remained in close conference
VOL. I. I

with Mrs. Hopkins for some time after they returned to the mansion, and was fully persuaded by herself and her confidante that she was in love with Captain Conway ; she was determined also to tell her love, and not, like the gentle Viola, "pine in secret," and "let concealment like a worm in the bud feed on her damask cheek."

Mrs. Hopkins applauded this noble candour, this generous spirit, this disinterested affection ; for, independent of Sir Thomas, every child had by the will of their maternal grandfather the sum of 4000*l.* at their own disposal ; and this, to a soldier of no other fortune than his commission, might be considered an object too advantageous to be rejected : it would certainly enable him to purchase a majority ; and then, Mrs. Hopkins told her, she was so charming, that she did not doubt he would find her and her fortune irresistible.

Mrs. Hopkins imagined herself an able negotiator in every affair that required address and circumspection ; had a high opin-

ion of her own skill in searching into and discovering motives, meaning, and all the secret workings of the human heart, even before they were known to the heart itself. She proposed first to learn if Captain Conway had an attachment; for she must say that she did not like his being so much with Ellen Herbert, though that girl was so wrapped up in her books and her brother, that she did not think she cared for any thing else in the world: however, she would find all out. Mrs. Sinclair had certainly a great deal of reserve, and would not always speak to the point, or answer the exact question put to her; but she thought she could manage to draw her out—without her suspecting it. Thus enumerating all the difficulties of her enterprise in order to enhance the merit of its success, with a profusion of compliments to her sweet young friend upon her delicate and generous attachment, she left her to indulge her visions of romantic folly.

In the morning, Mrs. Hopkins sallied forth

to the Cottage ; and gladly as Mrs. Sinclair would have escaped from such an intruder, she did not like to introduce in the country the town system of denial, by desiring her servants to say *not at home*. She was alone ; and Mrs. Hopkins, unwilling to lose so favourable an opportunity of speaking by any delay, with a few preparatory sentences opened her mission.

How good Captain Conway was to attend them home last night ! But for him, she verily believed Miss Anna Maria would never have had the courage to go, she was so remarkably timid, and afraid of every thing!—but then she knew he would protect her. “ Protect her from what ? ” interrupted Mrs. Sinclair with real but rather ill-timed surprise. “ I did not mean to say,” replied Mrs. Hopkins, “ that there was any real danger ; but the thunder storm had so alarmed her ! and though it was gone off—though in fact it did not quite come on—yet it might have done so, and she is frightened at every dark cloud. But then her nerves are so delicate,

that the frogs and sheep and cows and all the animals she sees she is afraid of ; so that, as I said, she was, I mean *I* was so happy to have Captain Conway to take care of her, and I wish with all my heart she always had him, or such a person, for her protector.” “I think she requires some one indeed,” said Mrs. Sinclair : “she ought not to be out of leading-strings, and never should go out of the house.” “O Mrs. Sinclair, that would be hard, never to go out! I only wish she had somebody like Captain Conway to take care of her.” “It is a pity she has not,” replied Mrs. Sinclair carelessly, and without perceiving the drift of Mrs. Hopkins’s discourse. “Do you really think so, Mrs. Sinclair, and do you think his heart is disengaged?” “That can be of little consequence to Miss Anna Maria, I should suppose, if his *arm* is.” “It is of more consequence than you imagine,” replied Mrs. Hopkins. “I believe I must be plain with you; for I am come here on purpose to ask you, as his friend and relation, if his affections are disengaged?”

"And why this question, ma'am?" said Mrs. Sinclair gravely. "Why, to tell you the truth," whispering though no one was present, "my sweet young friend Anna Maria, who never was in love in her life,—though she walks by moonlight till twelve o'clock with Lord Newberry who is dying for her,—as soon as she saw Captain Conway, knew he was the only man she could ever give her heart to; and she is now quite pining herself away lest he should be engaged to any one, though we are sure there is nobody hereabouts for him to love."

Mrs. Sinclair felt both surprise and disgust at this indelicate disclosure, and her countenance and manner expressed both. "Does Miss Wills," she said, "sanction this communication, and authorize these inquiries?" "Yes, she knows I am come." "And *why* are you come?" said Mrs. Sinclair with high disdain in her look. "Why, my dear ma'am," said Mrs. Hopkins, "we should make allowance for young ladies in love; we have been in love ourselves, I dare

say, and we know what it is : we are none of us so wise and so discreet and reserved then as at other times ; and this poor thing I really believe will die, if Captain Conway does not return her love—unless indeed he is engaged, and then she will not think of him, I am sure.” “ *Poor thing* indeed !” repeated Mrs. Sinclair contemptuously.

Mrs. Hopkins, baffled and confused, half hangry and half ashamed, said, “ I see you have no pity for her, so I may as well go. But perhaps you don’t know, ma’am, that she has a fortune of 4000*l.* at her own disposal ; and when Sir Thomas dies, though he has a large family, I know he will provide handsomely for them all. It breaks my heart, I am sure,” added she in an affected whine, “ to think that I have no hopes to give her, for I am her confidante.” “ I see you are, madam,” said Mrs. Sinclair.

Mrs. Hopkins, with mingled feelings of rage, shame, and disappointment, left the house, and proceeded to the mansion, to im-

part what had passed, with as much more as she thought proper to add, to her love-sick friend. "Well, dear Hopkins," said she in a languid tone, "what have you to tell me?" "Oh! there is nothing to be done with Mrs. Sinclair, she would give me no answer; she has a heart like a flint; she never can have loved; she cannot feel for those who do love—as I do, my dear." "But what said she? have you not found out whether he is engaged or not?" "I have found out nothing." "Then," said the *gentle* fair one rather sharply, "why did you come away till you had known something? what do you think I sent you for?" "Come, come, my dear, be patient: I know he is not engaged. Mrs. Sinclair did not actually tell me so, but I am sure from her manner he is not; and I can always guess as much from manner as from words. Then she pities you—Oh! if you had but heard in what a sweet manner she said 'Poor thing!' you would never forget it." "But I thought you said she

would give no answer? How came she to pity me then?" "Yes, I did say she would give no answer; that is, she would not speak to the point at once, as I would have had her; but when I represented you, my dear, as you are, so gentle and amiable and unhappy, she pitied you." "I don't like to be pitied, I don't want her pity." "But you would not have thought her pity like other people's pity; it was quite different. However, never mind that; I find she will not interfere in the business, for particular reasons which she did not choose to tell me: but she will not oppose it, that I can see. I think we had now better contrive some way to get him to visit here a little oftener, and by himself; for at present he has done nothing but drive out his aunt, and walk about with his cousin and Ellen Herbert, though it is plain he does not care a pin for either. Therefore my advice is, that your brother call upon him sometimes, and invite him here; and then we shall see," said she significantly. The advice was thought excellent,

and it was agreed to lure Conway to the mansion.

George, who good-humouredly acquiesced in any plan which gave him no trouble, promised to call upon him, and ask him to dinner; though he said he did not much like to encounter the haughty looks of either of the ladies, particularly of Miss Douglas, after the airs she had shown to Lord Newberry. The net was spread, Mrs. Hopkins promised to assist in its management, and already congratulated herself and Anna Maria upon the success of her labours.

Mrs. Hopkins's long visit had banished Julia and Conway; but seeing her at length depart, they returned to the house. "Is she gone?" said Julia in a whisper, "quite gone?" "What a gadfly!" exclaimed Conway. "And you the cause, Frederic," said Mrs. Sinclair. "How so? What blue spirits and gray could throw such a spell over me, and I be unconscious of it?" "I do not like to make sport even of the weaknesses and follies of my own sex; but, really, there is something so

ridiculous in this woman's intelligence, so forced and so affected in her own sympathy that I cannot forbear laughing, and treating the whole as an absurd jest. But prepare yourself to hear the awful secret: You are beloved—beloved by the beautiful Anna Maria Wills, with a fortune of four thousand pounds at her own disposal, and great expectations at her father's death, which, with her own sweet person, are all dedicated and offered to you!"

Mrs. Sinclair, disgusted as she was with the young lady and her confidante, had yet considered the whole affair as so silly, that she did not scruple to impart it in the same light in which she viewed it to her nephew; but was astonished when he looked serious, and replied in a most heroic tone, "They jest at scars who never felt a wound." "But, my dear Fred, what wound have you received? except (she added in a pathetic tone) in that poor dear arm; for *that* I do feel." "There may be others more deep," he said with an affected sigh. "But what say you

to the lady and her four thousand pounds?" "That it is more than I deserve." "The lady or the fortune?" "Both." "Very humble, truly; but believe me, Frederic, there will be a close siege laid to you, and What will you do—retreat?" "Retreat? what, before a force I fear not,—one whom I even long to meet? Leave the management of it to me; let us have no ambuscade." "Frederic, I dislike these schemes," said Mrs. Sinclair, "these plots and counterplots." "Now, my dear aunt," said Conway in an accent that begged indulgence, "this is too bad. I have been here a fortnight—I expected to fall in love with some of the little rustics, and have been disappointed of the amusement I promised myself. As for Julia, she is my cousin, and I could not be in love with a relation, though sanctioned by the rubric. Ellen Herbert could love nothing whom she considers inferior to her brother. Arabella Hopkins and Catherine Foster are little better than nonentities; and now the only tender object that presents itself to my af-

fections you would cast a ridicule upon, and make me despise. If Bertha were but a year older, I should certainly be in love with her ; there is a something in her eye which bewitches me ; but she is a child, and an awkward one. Now here's a dear sweet tender soul who condescends to take pity upon my hapless state, and offers me her hand filled with four thousand pounds—with a majority, my aunt!" "Frederic," said she seriously, "rather trust to the chances of promotion than accept a hand thus offered ; the money may purchase you a majority, if she permits it : but be a soldier of fortune rather than incur a debt for which the severest interest of the heart will be exacted, if.....but let me not think a woman's forward whims can fascinate you. I should feel some pity for her, had she not authorized the communication ; and as I do not consider it the folly of a girl who is guided by an artful confidante, I must abhor an indecorum." "You judge too severely, my dear aunt." "My ideas you may perhaps call old maid-

ish and antediluvian. I do not think women should ‘unsought be won.’ Custom has established this rule amongst the civilized and refined part of every nation, and to infringe it is a violation of women’s greatest ornament, delicacy. It would be unnatural to imagine that they are not to feel a preference for an amiable object, even if unassured of a return. But to make a first advance to a man, either through the medium of friends, or by the more unequivocal testimony of their own declaration, is a want of that propriety which if not a principle is often an useful substitute for it. ‘Not loving *first*, but loving wrong, is shame,’ is a sentiment which I fear has been supposed to sanction an *avowal* of affection, instead of its being an *apology* for first feeling it; and on this I suppose the delicate and timid Anna Maria is acting: but I should be sorry, Frederic, to see you the prize of the forward, or the dupe of the designing.” “Do not fear for me,” he said carelessly. But Mrs. Sinclair perceived, or at least imagined she per-

ceived, that his thoughts dwelt more upon the circumstances she had imparted to him than they deserved. She could not believe he fancied it possible to return the affection of such a frivolous girl ; nor that the few thousands she possessed could be sufficiently attractive to induce him to offer her his hand ; nor could she think his vanity was flattered by being thus distinguished, thus solicited. But in the last supposition she was mistaken —his vanity *was flattered* ; and though he had no preference for Anna Maria, curiosity prompted him to investigate further the sentiments she had professed, and self-love led him to encourage them.

The plan of invitation to the mansion succeeded to Mrs. Hopkins's fullest wish : she had a pride also in having counteracted what she imagined Mrs. Sinclair's schemes ; for she evidently perceived the attachment would not be sanctioned by her : in fact, she triumphed in the success of her stratagems, boasted of her discernment, and congratulated her

friend upon having the handsomest man in the world at her feet.

"But he does not tell me he loves me," said Anna Maria. "He tells you by his eyes," replied her confidante, "he shall soon tell you so by words." Here she was mistaken. Conway observed much; and the more he observed, the more doubtful was he whether to meet the lady's kindness or not: yet he thought such disinterested affection should be returned. Caressed, courted, and indulged as he was by the whole family (for his gaiety and good humour found a passport to every heart), he wished to evince his gratitude; and in what manner could he so strongly show it as by becoming one of its members? Still something always prevented the intended proposal. He knew his aunt's sentiments upon the subject, and he had too much respect for her to act in direct opposition to them. She thought Miss Wills negatively good, but so full of absurd pretensions, that even the man who attached

himself to her would in some degree participate in her folly. But having once expressed her opinion to her nephew, she forbore any further attempt at influencing his decision in this affair ; and he was a daily visitor at the mansion without having his motives inquired into, or his conduct canvassed, by either his aunt or cousin.

One evening when he returned he threw himself into a chair, indulging a violent fit of laughter : as soon as he could speak, he began thus : “ I have witnessed some philosophical experiments that produced the most ludicrous effect upon the parties who made them. This was the inhaling of the nitrous oxide gas. Sir Thomas, at the desire of Deborah, was the first subject upon which it was tried. He danced about the room with a kind of tipsy delight, and made many odd grimaces, much to the amusement of the spectators, who indulged their mirth at his expense ; so that, when he recovered, the good baronet insisted upon Deborah, who was the projec-

tor of this experiment, trying it also. She was very averse to it, and the contest occasioned high words between the parties; but Sir Thomas would have his own way. ‘She a chemist, and shrink from any experiment! Why, experiments are the very soul of chemistry,’ he said, repeating her own words; and Deborah, after much resistance, yielded. The effect upon her was that of phrensy:—she tossed about her arms, slapped her father’s face (an insult which the worthy baronet did not submit to with so much dignity as a philosopher ought, or with so many allowances as were due to an *experiment*); and committed so many extravagancies, that every one present trembled for the consequences to themselves, and rejoiced when it was over. Charles was the only one who could be prevailed upon to repeat the trial; he threw the bladder into the face of Anna Maria, who happened to be near him, [but he did not add what followed,—that the gentle creature was very nearly resenting this affront, by

giving him a sharp slap on the face ; her fair hand was lifted up to strike the blow ; but he jumped away like a wild thing ; and in a moment recovering herself, she gave a slight scream, and her head sunk on the shoulder of Conway,] and so the farce ended."

" And most amusing it must have been," said Julia. " I should have liked to have seen the effects of this experiment on Anna Maria ; for, if the natural disposition has any influence upon the action produced, I think she would commit the most laughable absurdities." " Hush, Julia, do not be severe ; she is very good-humoured." " Are you sure of it ?" " Yes ; I have no reason to think otherwise." " Poor Bertha has," said Julia.

Bertha was now at home, quite recovered from her illness ; and Conway, who had played and chatted with her at the Rectory, continued to treat her with the same familiarity. One day when there was a scarcity of seats in the summer house, and he had taken Bertha on his knee, he observed that

the gentle Anna's countenance assumed a look of rather severe displeasure, and a glance was directed to Bertha, which induced her instantly to quit her seat. But as nothing was said, and Bertha had vanished, the disturbed countenance of the angry and mortified fair one soon assumed its placidity, and the circumstance was forgotten till Julia's observation revived it in his memory. He however did not mention it ; but he determined to watch the reflection on this mirror of the mind, before he intrusted his happiness to one whose temper might be bad. His own was so sweet, his opinions so kind, and his nature so indulgent, that little pettishnesses he could easily excuse in any one. He continued to caress and notice Bertha ; but he found she usually fled from him ; and as he constantly heard it repeated in the family, what an odd, disagreeable, bad-tempered girl she was ! and frequently a wish expressed that Mrs. Herbert would take her, as she was happy with no one else,

he partly believed she *was* an odd-, and not perhaps a *very* good-humoured girl ; but disagreeable he could not agree to.

The progress of the arts practised to lure and attach Conway was not so rapid as Mrs. Hopkins and her friend had flattered themselves they would be. He fluttered round the blaze, but always contrived to keep his wings uninjured, and escape just at the moment when they thought him devoted. How much longer he might have been safe from the dangers of tenderness unsolicited, attentions the most seductive, hints the most specious, and expectations the most obvious, it is impossible to say, had not a circumstance occurred which for a time annihilated every scheme and every pleasure.

Sir Thomas and his lady always received him with a friendly welcome, the elder young ladies with politeness, Anna Maria with a drooping sensibility, and Deborah conferred upon him the highest honour by admitting him into her laboratory—her sanctum sanctorum. George met him with a shake of the

hand, that meant any thing or nothing ; Henrietta, Laura, and Lauretta, with rather more pleasure than the generality of people who visited them, because he made them laugh more. Charles loved him ; and Bertha beheld with interest the relation of Mrs. Sinclair and Julia, and the friend of Edmund and Ellen. His own cheerful disposition and easy manners diffused an hilarity whenever he appeared, and every one at the mansion became sensible of their powers. Yet still his attentions were so general, that it was difficult to know to whom the palm of preference was given ; whether to the languishing Lavinia, the disdainful Sacharissa, the sighing Anna Maria, the insipid Henrietta, the philosophic Deborah, the tender twins, or the child Bertha : to each he had something kind or pleasant to say. Every one could perceive the fond attention bestowed upon him by Anna Maria, but that he took more notice of Bertha, with whom he talked, played, and laughed with the ease of a friend and the familiarity of a brother.

Anna Maria made some remarks upon her conduct, and severely reproved her for encouraging such liberties: "It is true you are but a child, though I can tell you you are grown a very forward one since you were at the Rectory; and if you go on thus with Captain Conway, I shall complain to my mother." A complaint to her mother she knew would be a decree of banishment to her garret, and a prohibition of all intercourse with the Rectory; and poor Bertha not only loved the friends she formed there, she began to enjoy the sweets of society; and alarmed at this threat, she fled from Conway whenever she saw him approach, resigning the pleasures of his good humour, to avert the evils whch she dreaded. He observed and regretted these sudden flights of his favourite; but she so dexterously eluded him, that he had no opportunity of asking for an explanation.

To laugh and chat with Bertha, was in fact the greatest amusement he had at the mansion, whatever was the interest he felt

for Anna Maria ; for he met with no intellectual conversation, no touching charms of native feeling, no captivations of fancy, no buoyant vivacity, such as he found at the Rectory and the Cottage ; yet he received kindness and hospitality, was treated with ease and familiarity, and he was grateful for their attentions. He persuaded himself he was rather distinguished ; he saw he was a favourite ; and though he was not perfectly satisfied with the quota of sense and conversation that he met with, yet it sufficed for the time, and he was sure of being delighted with his aunt and Julia when he returned to the Cottage.

Mrs. Hopkins, sometimes, when she saw him passing, would call him into her parlour to have a little chat, would descant upon the virtues of Anna Maria,—that she was worth all the rest,—and whoever gained her would gain a prize. She knew but one who was worthy of her. And *the one* must have been blind indeed, had he not seen who was meant in this solitary clause. Though Con-

way's good sense, purity of feeling, and judgement, did not approve of such open and direct declarations, yet his heart pleaded in favour of the victim whom his attractions had overcome; and vanity, that powerful principle in most bosoms, that passion of no sex, or of either, lent a too willing ear to every thing addressed to it. Still his inclinations were unfixed, and his mind undetermined, whether to meet and to reward the *disinterested* attachment he heard professed for him. There was a disparity of five years between him and the lady, and she had the ascendancy; but she looked much younger than he did, as Mrs. Hopkins had taken occasion to observe, and therefore this was of little consequence.

Whilst every argument was vacillating in his mind, and various feelings acting upon his heart, he was suddenly called up to London upon particular business; so suddenly, that it barely allowed of his things to be packed up, and his bidding adieu to the Rec-

troy and the Mansion. Anna Maria had an hysterick, and he was obliged to tear himself from her at this interesting moment, and set out on his journey. Mrs. Hopkins was soon summoned to her assistance, and the most palatable consolation administered to her relief.

Mrs. Sinclair and Julia were sorry to lose one whose many virtues they sincerely loved, and whose little faults they affectionately forgave ; but after a few hours of silence and regret, they resumed their cheerfulness and their employments.

Lord Newberry, who still remained at the mansion, and who had availed himself of every opportunity to see and converse with Julia, notwithstanding the reserve which he always found, and the disdain which he often imagined, in her manner, really began to entertain for her, sentiments not only of admiration but of affection ; and insensible as she had appeared to his assiduities, and his implications of attachment, he thought her a

treasure worth possessing, and he determined to secure it to himself by the irresistible offer of his hand. He knew some mystery was attached to her birth, but who she was was immaterial : every eye acknowledged her beautiful, every tongue proclaimed her amiable, and report declared her to be rich. His father had selected a lady for the first reason only ; yet he might object to his choice from doubts of the respectability of her birth : he should not therefore consult him upon the subject. Once his wife, Julia would be received into his family ; and with his resolutions formed, he wrote an elaborate avowal of his love, and an offer of his hand ; to which a prompt, laconic, but respectful answer was returned —declining the honour he proposed. “ This is very strange,” he thought : “ she has not taken even an hour to consider of it ; and yet I do not believe her affections are engaged. I cannot guess to whom, if they are.” The rejection however disconcerted him, it was one that admitted no hope of repeal, it was in the most definitive terms ; and having

no longer any motives for remaining at Albany, and weary of the insipid and affected beings who composed Sir Thomas's family, he returned to his father's.

Mrs. Sinclair was informed of his lordship's declaration, and saw the answer. She expressed no surprise at either. Julia was formed to be admired and beloved ; but Lord Newberry's claims to admiration and esteem were not so unequivocal ; and whatever was the honour his rank would have conferred upon her, she secretly rejoiced it had had no influence in her decision. The whole affair had begun and ended in so short a space of time, that it scarcely made an impression upon the mind of either Mrs. Sinclair or Julia, though the whole village were wondering at it ; for (by what means I presume not to say) the contents of the letter written by his lordship, and that returned by Julia, were circulated and commented upon.

“ Miss Douglas must certainly be engaged before she came to Albany, perhaps betrothed to some one when she was in her

cradle, or she never would have refused such an offer : it was very mysterious," said Mrs. Hopkins.

Mrs. Foster, who pretended to have as much penetration into the affairs of the Cottage, as Mrs. Hopkins had into those of the Mansion, said "it was not at all mysterious to her ; she could understand it, though she should say nothing."

The Miss Willses were *all astonished* ; not one, except the chemist Deborah and the child Bertha, but wished herself in the place of Julia.

The refusal was canvassed also at the Rectory. Mr. Herbert bestowed the warmest eulogiums upon his favourite for rejecting rank and fortune if she could not esteem the possessor of them. Mrs. Herbert thought there must be some latent preference for another. Ellen's heart beat high with hopes for her brother ; while his, in spite of all his reasoning to the contrary, cherished similar feelings.

The days now glided on as usual. Julia,

who was in no respect either elated or affected by the conquest she had made, seemed entirely to have forgotten Lord Newberry; and his name was never mentioned by her or her aunt. Conway's departure had left them at liberty to follow their accustomed pursuits without interruption; and the daily domestic intercourse between the Rectory and the White Cottage was now resumed with new delight. Edmund could not resist the pleasure of again assisting at their little concerts; of listening to the voice of Julia; of gazing on her; of attending to her; of associating with her. "It is but for a short time," he would say to himself, "and then I shall quit her perhaps for ever. The danger is alone mine, and I will dare it."

Letters arrived from Conway, informing them of the conclusion of his business in town, and of his almost immediate return to the Peninsula, as his wound was well, and his leave of absence nearly expired. He mentioned the Willses in general terms; and Mrs. Sinclair hoped the machinations of

Mrs. Hopkins and the artifices of Anna Maria had been in vain, and that the toils of war would soon banish every softer interest from his bosom.

Several weeks had passed, and the time approached for Edmund's return to college. Every face at the Rectory wore an expression of sorrow. Mrs. Herbert could not mention his departure without tears; and Ellen's naturally bright and beaming countenance was shaded by a melancholy gloom.

Julia possessed in a very eminent degree the happy art of taking likenesses. She had drawn a fine miniature of Ellen, and the delighted parents expressed a wish to have one of Edmund as its companion. Julia blushed; but such a wish at such a moment she could not refuse; and if by the exercise of her talents she could do any thing which should mitigate their grief when absent from the object of their heart's fondest affections, she thought she should be ungrateful and unkind not to attempt it. She therefore promised to comply with their wishes, and a

time was fixed for the first sitting. Every thing was prepared :—the palette spread, the ivory ready, the chair placed, the attitude chosen, and the pencil trembling in her hand, when she felt to a degree of agony, how arduous was the task she had undertaken, and how impossible it would be for her to execute it. To gaze intently on that face, of which she had hitherto stolen but hasty glances; to meet the full expression of that eye, before which her own had always drooped ; to trace the outline of a mouth, whose words had always delighted, were difficulties insurmountable ; impossibilities she felt herself unable to attempt ; and she was going to give up the task in despair, when she remembered the mother's request, the father's expectation, the sister's hope ; and she resolved at least to make the trial : but her pencil was so unsteady, that she made little progress in this first sitting. Edmund could not help observing her agitation : his own was scarcely less in feeling, though it was less obvious. He attributed her emotions to the

native delicacy of her character, which made her shrink from the task she had undertaken ; and he wished for her sake it had never been requested : but every moment with Julia was so precious, that he could not deny himself the luxury of such as these, when he might watch her in silence, and read the various movements of her mind in her ingenuous countenance. At length the picture was completed, the resemblance acknowledged, and the delighted parents gave to the happy artist their warmest thanks.

The evening preceding Edmund's departure, he proposed to Ellen and Julia taking his favourite walk. The sister's heart was agonized at the thoughts of a separation from her brother, and tears, which she could scarcely restrain, swam in her eyes. Edmund's spirits were also depressed. Julia attempted to divert both ; and though she shared in their dejection, she more effectually struggled with her emotions. "When shall we three meet again?" she said in the liveliest accent she could assume. "Not in

thunder, lightning, and in rain," replied Edmund; "but in idea I hope we shall often be present to each other: you must not let this little girl forget me," he said smiling, and looking at Ellen, whose hand he affectionately held in his. Ellen's tears flowed fast. "Come, come, my sister, have more fortitude; we part but for a short time, I hope, and I leave you with a friend who will console you for my absence, and will even supply my place." "O no! that is impossible," said Julia emphatically; "though there may be a friend who sticketh closer than a brother, it cannot be such a brother as Edmund Herbert." She blushed at her own warmth of expression, but could not recall the words; and she had no ready stratagem, no little artifice to counteract their effect, had she wished for it. An expression of joy diffused itself over the countenance of Edmund; and though it was *the brother* Julia had addressed herself to, a gleam of hope, bright but undefinable, darted across his heart.

As they were passing a cottage, Ellen was accosted by a little boy, who said his mother wished to see her ; and she left them to follow the child. They waited for her return at a gate, from which they had a fine expansive view of cultivated land, spires and hamlets. They had stood for a few minutes admiring the scene, when Julia, whose hand had been resting within Edmund's arm, suddenly seeming to be sensible of its situation, gently withdrew it. He sought for a moment to retain the treasure ; but seeing an unusual glow upon her cheek, and a look of embarrassment, he yielded it without further reluctance ; but continued to watch the mantling colour, the softened eye downcast and pensive ; and if he did not gather from these observations an absolute hope that he was beloved, he obtained a conviction that he was not indifferent to her ; and he experienced emotions of delight such as he had never before felt.

It was a bright October evening ; the sun had just set, and the moon had taken up

"its wondrous tale" in the heavens. They watched it for some time in silence, which at last Julia interrupted : " If, as some philosophers have asserted, our thoughts are registered upon the moon's disk, what a consolation would it be in absence to read those of a friend !" " Were Julia's to be traced there," said Edmund, " and could *I* read them, I should become a worshipper of night, and of the moon." It was the first time he had ever called her Julia, and she thought the name had never sounded so sweet. The familiar appellation, pronounced in a tone of the tenderest respect, *his own peculiar tone*, thrilled on her heart. She made no reply ; but she wished for an echo to have repeated the word. " I fear," he continued, laying his hand on hers, " that we must not hope to be such favoured mortals, as there to find the sentiments of those we esteem, the wishes of those we love, the many hopes and fears which those from whom we are separated feel for us ; the parent's anxiety, the sister's tenderness, the

friend's—— : what may I say?" added he, looking at Julia. " *Kind thoughts,*" she answered with some hesitation. " The friend's *kind thoughts,*" he repeated: " though this is denied us, yet to know that the eye which has met our own is fixed upon this planet ; that the remembrance of a friend with whom we have viewed it is accompanied by *kind thoughts*, then it becomes an object of the dearest interest, of the most soothing consolation. I do not allow myself to be romantic ; and yet, if I dared to hope that sometimes when you look at the moon, you will remember the friend with whom this evening you saw it rise, and will recall this conversation, to me it would be a planet of more than Indian adoration." " I will watch it every evening," said Julia, " and——" she paused, " will—remember you." " Bless you then," said Edmund tenderly and emphatically. Ellen just then returned; and observing that the evening was growing chill, Edmund advised Julia to wrap her shawl more closely about her ; and his

arm, under pretence of assisting her to do so, half encircled her waist, and defended her from the cold. He and his sister attended her into the cottage, and the last adieu was uttered before Mrs. Sinclair, whose hand he respectfully kissed, while Julia's he only pressed, as he pronounced an imperfect "God bless you!"

Mrs. Sinclair knew that his loss would be felt by all, but she little suspected how much by Julia. She retired early that evening to rest, and her niece found a solace in the unobserved indulgence of her regrets. That the tears she shed had their source in affection, she could no longer disguise from herself; and she wept the more at this conviction. She dared not flatter herself that he loved her, though she could recall many instances of marked kindness; still it was only "a course of small, quiet attentions, not so pointed as to alarm, and (she thought) not so vague as to be misunderstood." They might be only the customary observances of politeness; such as he would pay to any

woman. Yet when she particularly reflected upon them, a look of tenderness, an accent of solicitude, rushed to her remembrance ; and she believed she possessed some portion of his regard. She recollects also, that when her eye has suddenly turned towards him, she has often found his fixed attentively upon her : when he has presented his hand to her, she has felt a tremor that communicated itself to her own ; he had called her that evening “ Julia,” and the name was uttered in a tone peculiarly tender : but he knew she was the friend, the cherished friend, of his sister ; and it might be simply to Ellen’s friend he addressed this dear familiar title. She could not satisfy herself with her investigation, and at last concluded it with quoting, “ *L’amour n’a rien de si tendre, ni l’amitié de si doux.*”

There is not, in the secret history of the human heart, a period which we retrace with so much interest and pleasure as the commencement and course of attachment ; when a word, a glance, a touch, will awaken our

hopes, and impart rapture to our bosoms : even fears and apprehensions aid the general charm of this interesting period. The attainment of the object beloved, does not afford to the heart so sweet a retrospect as the first dawning and gradual progress of affection, when a look was bliss, and a smile reward.

The families met the next day ; and the sincere sympathy which Mrs. Sinclair expressed for the loss they had mutually sustained, gave consolation to the parents and sister. The former dwelt with pride and delight upon their son's virtues and talents, and found a ready auditor and an assenting friend ; for Mrs. Sinclair esteemed, admired, and loved him. Ellen and Julia were talking apart. "What a treasure to my dear mother is the miniature!" said Ellen : "but it is only so to her, for she keeps it in her own cabinet ; and this morning I found her with it in her hand, looking at it as if for consolation. I would I had such a one!" "Perhaps," replied Julia, touched with El-

len's affectionate wish, "I could paint another, if your mother would spare this." "I dare not ask her at present," said Ellen. "I think," said Julia after a pause, "I could do one without it." "Have you then his features by heart?" said Ellen quickly. "Not perhaps by *heart*," replied Julia blushing, "but I think I have by *memory*, and for your sake I will endeavour to retrace them." The employment was sweet but dangerous—the delighted sister hung over her as she executed her task. If the features were not so correct as in the former one, the character was superior. She gave the eye its most eloquent expression, the mouth its sweetest smile, and Ellen exclaimed, "This is *our* own Edmund, so does he look when he converses with us. Ten thousand thanks, my Julia, for this inestimable treasure!" It was a treasure she almost reluctantly yielded up; but she felt a consolation in knowing that his features were so faithfully imprinted on her memory, that she could at any time sketch them.

Mrs. Sinclair made her silent observations

upon the ready and happy execution of the picture ; but whilst she saw Julia apparently as cheerful as usual, or affected by his departure in no greater degree than sympathy for her friends might naturally excite, she forbore making any particular remarks to her. Every thing now went on as during the first three months of their residence at Albany, except the occasional intercourse with the Willses, many of whom were dispersed on different visits, or to fashionable watering-places. But Bertha was stationary at the Mansion ; and her only happiness was to run when she could to the Rectory or the Cottage, as there she was always sure to find friends who affectionately welcomed her. Reserved and shy at home, where she was perpetually chidden or neglected, here she was candid and cheerful, delighted to render any one a little service, and anxious to become what they wished her. Her awkward stoop had been kindly noticed by Mrs. Herbert and Ellen, and she had endeavoured to correct it : her low half tones and inarticu-

late accent they taught her to conquer ; they bestowed praises upon her attempts, and encouraged her to hope they might be successful : she began to feel some confidence in herself ; and to be approved by friends whom she so warmly loved was her highest ambition, and her constant aim. She was more attentive to her dress, for she observed that Ellen was like a little quaker in the purity of hers ; and Julia was always neat as well as elegant ; and she had heard Edmund say he could not love any one who was not nice. The slatternly finery of her sisters she began to dislike, their dirty and idle habits she resolved never to follow. Julia and Ellen were striking contrasts to every one whom she saw at home, both in their person and manners ; and she resolved to take them as her model. In this excellent resolution she was aided by the attentions they always paid her ; for they loved the qualities that gradually unfolded themselves to their observation, they pitied her situation, and wished to correct her faults.

In the amended health of Mrs. Sinclair Julia found a constant source of gratitude and happiness ; and for this alone, had there been no Ellen, no Edmund, would she have blessed the day on which they first came to Albany : but to see the friend, the relation whom she loved as a parent, and who protected and watched over her, restored to the enjoyment of life's best blessing, called forth her liveliest feelings of joy and thankfulness.

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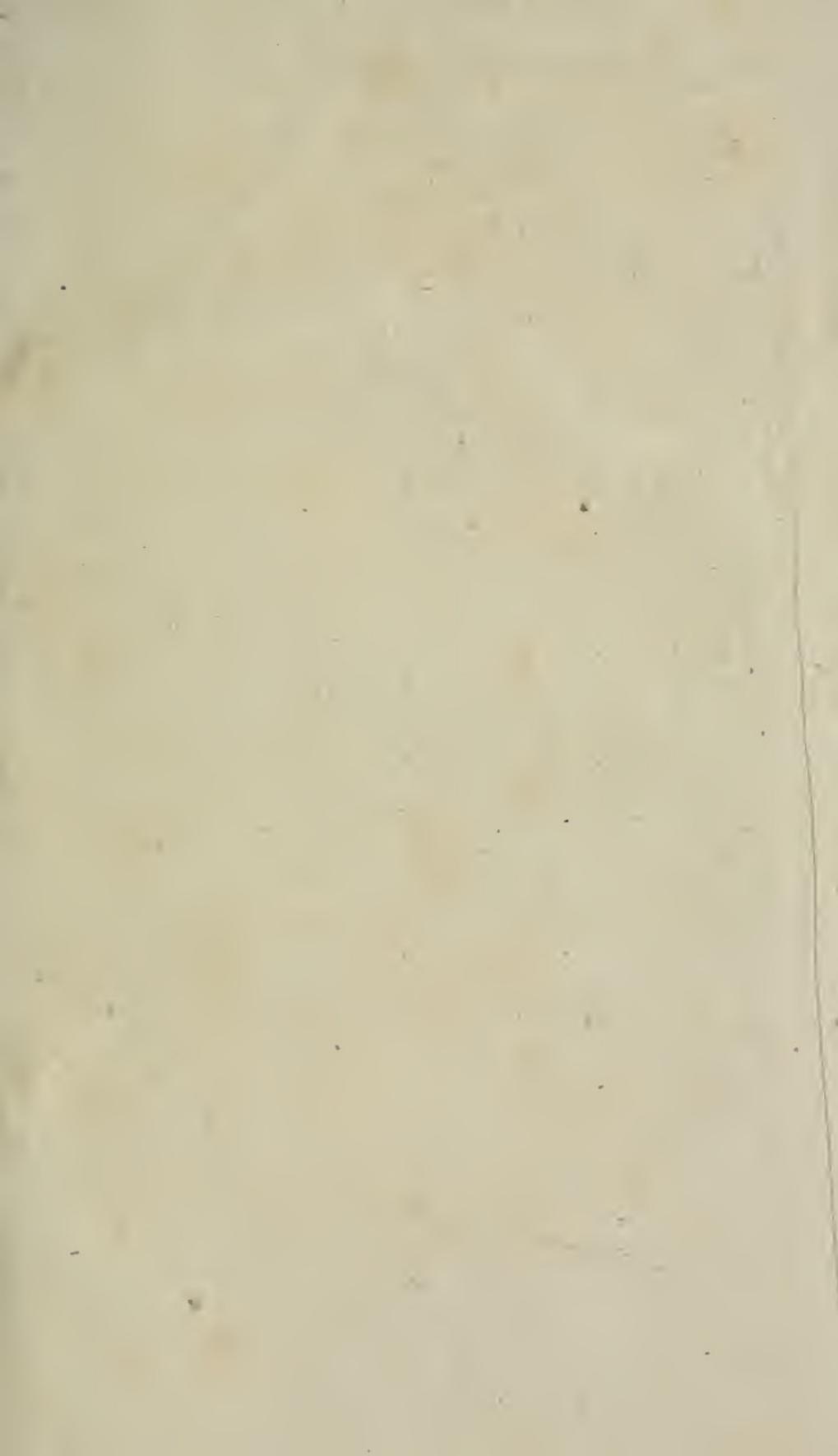
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